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ARTHUR MERVYN.

A Tale.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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ARTHUR MERVYN.

CHAP. I.

A SURPRISE.

IT was now incumbent on me to ſeek the habitation of Thetford. To leave this houſe acceſſible to every paſſenger appeared to be imprudent. I had no key by which I might lock the principal door. I therefore bolted it on the inſide, and paſſed through a window, the ſhutters of which I cloſed, though I could not faſten them after me. This led me into a ſpacious court, at the end of which was a brick wall, over which I leaped into

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the ſtreet. This was the way by which I had formerly eſcaped from the ſame precincts.

The ſtreets, as I paſſed, were deſolate and ſilent. The largeſt computation made the number of fugitives two-thirds of the whole people; yet, judging by the univerſal deſolation, it ſeemed as if the ſolitude were nearly abſolute. That ſo many of the houſes were cloſed, I was obliged to aſcribe to the ceſſation of traffic, which made the opening of their windows uſeleſs, and the terror of infection, which cauſed the inhabitants to ſeclude themſelves from the obſervation of each other.

I proceeded to ſearch out the houſe to which Eſtwick had directed me, as the abode of Thetford. What was my conſternation when I found it to be the ſame, at the door of which the converſation took place, of which I had been an auditor on the laſt evening!

I recalled the ſcene, of which a rude ſketch had been given by the *hearſe-men*. If ſuch

ſuch were the fate of the maſter of the family, abounding with money and friends, what could be hoped for the moneyleſs and friendleſs Wallace?—The houſe appeared to be vacant and ſilent; but theſe tokens might deceive. There was little room for hope; but certainty was wanting, and might, perhaps, be obtained by entering the houſe. In ſome of the upper rooms a wretched being might be immured; by whom the information, ſo earneſtly deſired, might be imparted, and to whom my preſence might bring relief, not only from peſtilence, but famine. For a moment I forgot my own neceſſitous condition, and reflected not that abſtinence had already undermined my ſtrength.

I proceeded to knock at the door. That my ſignal was unnoticed, produced no ſurpriſe. The door was unlocked, and I opened it. At this moment my attention was attracted by the opening of another door near me. I looked, and perceived a man iſſuing forth from a houſe at a ſmall diſtance.

It now occurred to me that the information which I ſought, might poſſibly be gained from one of Thetford's neighbours. This perſon was aged, but ſeemed to have loſt neither cheerfulneſs nor vigour. He had an air of intrepidity and calmneſs. It ſoon appeared that I was the object of his curioſity. He had, probably, marked my deportment through ſome window of his dwelling, and had come forth to make enquiries into the motives of my conduct.

He courteouſly ſaluted me.—"You ſeem," ſaid he, "to be in ſearch of ſome one. If I can afford you the information you want, you will be welcome to it."

Encouraged by this addreſs, I mentioned the name of Thetford, and added my fears that he had not eſcaped the general calamity.

"It is true," ſaid he. "Yeſterday himſelf, his wife, and his child were in a hopeleſs condition. I ſaw them in the evening, and expected not to find them alive this morning. As ſoon as it was light, however,

I viſited

I viſited the houſe again; but found it empty. I ſuppoſe they muſt have died, and been removed in the night."

Though anxious to aſcertain the deſtiny of Wallace, I was unwilling to put direct queſtions. I ſhuddered, while I longed to know the truth.

"Why," ſaid I, falteringly, "did he not ſeaſonably withdraw from the city?—Surely he had the means of purchaſing an aſylum in the country."

"I can ſcarcely tell you," he anſwered. "Some infatuation appeared to have ſeized him. No one was more timorous; but he ſeemed to think himſelf ſafe, as long as he avoided contact with infected perſons. He was likewiſe, I believe, detained by a regard to his intereſt. His flight would not have been more injurious to his affairs, than it was to thoſe of others; but gain was, in his eyes, the ſupreme good. He intended ultimately to withdraw; but his eſcape today gave him new courage to encounter

the perils of to-morrow. He deferred his departure from day to day, till it ceaſed to be practicable."

"His family," ſaid I, "was numerous. It conſiſted of more than his wife and children. Perhaps theſe retired in ſufficient ſeaſon."

"Yes," ſaid he, "his father left the houſe at an early period. One or two of the ſervants likewiſe forſook him. One girl, more faithful and heroic than the reſt, reſiſted the remonſtrances of her parents and friends, and reſolved to adhere to him in every fortune. She was anxious that the family ſhould fly from danger, and would willingly have fled in their company; but while they ſtaid, it was her immoveable reſolution not to abandon them.

"Alas, poor girl! ſhe knew not the nature of Thetford's heart. Unhappily, ſhe was the firſt to become ſick. I queſtion much whether her diſeaſe was peſtilential. It was, probably, a ſlight indiſpoſition,

opposition, which, in a few days, would have vanished of itself, or have readily yielded to suitable treatment.

"Thetford was transfixed with terror. Instead of summoning a physician to ascertain the nature of her symptoms, he called a negro and his cart from Bush-hill. In vain the neighbours interceded for this unhappy victim—in vain she implored his clemency, and asserted the lightness of her indisposition. She besought him to allow her to send to her mother, who resided a few miles in the country, who would hasten to her succour, and relieve him and his family from the danger and trouble of nursing her.

"The man was frantic with apprehension. He rejected her entreaties, though urged in a manner that would have subdued a heart of flint. The girl was innocent, and amiable, and courageous, but entertained an unconquerable dread of the hospital. Finding entreaties ineffectual, she exerted all her strength in opposition to the man who lifted her into the cart.

"Finding that her ſtruggles availed nothing, ſhe reſigned herſelf to deſpair. In going to the hoſpital, ſhe believed herſelf led to certain death, and to the ſufferance of every evil which the known inhumanity of its attendants could inflict. This ſtate of mind, added to expoſure to a noonday ſun, in an open vehicle moving for a mile over a rugged pavement, was ſufficient to deſtroy her. I was not ſurpriſed to hear that ſhe died the next day.

"This proceeding was ſufficiently iniquitous, yet it was not the worſt act of this man. The rank and education of the young woman might be ſome apology for negligence; but his clerk, a youth who ſeemed to enjoy his confidence, and to be treated by his family on the footing of a brother or ſon, fell ſick on the next night, and was treated in the ſame manner."

Theſe tidings ſtruck me to the heart. A burſt of indignation and ſorrow filled my eyes. I could ſcarcely ſtifle my emotion ſufficiently to aſk—"Of whom, Sir, do you ſpeak?

ſpeak?—Was the name of the youth—his name—was——"

"His name was Wallace.—I ſee that you have ſome intereſt in his fate. He was one whom I loved. I would have given half my fortune to procure him accommodation under ſome hoſpitable roof. His attack was violent; but ſtill his recovery, if he had been ſuitably attended, was poſſible. That he ſhould ſurvive removal to the hoſpital, and the treatment he muſt receive when there, was not to be hoped.

"The conduct of Thetford was as abſurd as it was wicked. To imagine this diſeaſe to be contagious, was the height of folly;—to ſuppoſe himſelf ſecure, merely by not permitting a ſick man to remain under his roof, was no leſs ſtupid; but Thetford's fears had ſubverted his underſtanding. He did not liſten to arguments or ſupplications. His attention was incapable of ſtraying from one object. To influence him by words, was equivalent to reaſoning with the deaf.

"Perhaps the wretch was more to be pitied than hated. The victims of his implacable caution could ſcarcely have endured agonies greater than thoſe which his puſillanimity inflicted on himſelf. Whatever be the amount of his guilt, the retribution has been adequate:—he witneſſed the death of his wife and child, and laſt night was the cloſe of his own exiſtence!—Their ſole attendant was a black woman; whom, by frequent viſits, I endeavoured, with little ſucceſs, to make diligent in the performance of her duty."

Such then was the cataſtrophe of Wallace. The end for which I journied hither was accompliſhed. His deſtiny was aſcertained; and all that remained was to fulfil the gloomy predictions of the lovely, but unhappy Suſan. To tell them all the truth, would be needleſſly to exaſperate her ſorrow.—Time, aided by the tenderneſs and ſympathy of friendſhip, may baniſh her deſpair, and relieve her from all but the witcheries of melancholy.

Having

Having diſengaged my mind from theſe reflections, I explained to my companion in general terms, my reasons for viſiting the city, and my curioſity reſpecting Thetford. He enquired into the particulars of my journey, and the time of my arrival. When informed that I had come in the preceding evening, and had paſſed the ſubſequent hours without ſleep or food, he expreſſed aſtoniſhment and compaſſion.

"Your undertaking," ſaid he, "has certainly been hazardous. There is poiſon in every breath which you draw; but this hazard has been greatly increaſed by abſtaining from food and ſleep. My advice is to haſten back into the country; but you muſt firſt take ſome repoſe and ſome victuals. If you paſs Schuylkill before nightfall, it will be ſufficient."

I mentioned the difficulty of procuring accommodation on the road. It would be moſt prudent to ſet out upon my journey ſo as to reach Malverton at night. As to food

and ſleep, they were not to be purchaſed in this city.

"True," anſwered my companion with quickneſs, "they are not to be bought; but I will furniſh you with as much as you deſire of both for nothing.—That is my abode," continued he, pointing to the houſe which he had lately left. "I reſide with a widow lady and her daughter, who took my counſel, and fled in due ſeaſon. I remain to moralize upon the ſcene, with only a faithful black, who makes my bed, prepares my coffee, and bakes my loaf. If I am ſick, all that a phyſician can do I will do for myſelf; and all that a nurſe can perform, I expect to be performed by Auſtin.

"Come with me, drink ſome coffee, reſt awhile on my mattreſs, and then fly with my benedictions on your head."

Theſe words were accompanied by features diſembarraſſed and benevolent. My temper is alive to ſocial impulſes, and I accepted his invitation, not ſo much becauſe I wiſhed

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to eat or ſleep, but becauſe I felt reluctance to part ſo ſoon with a being who poſſeſſed ſo much fortitude and virtue.

He was ſurrounded by neatneſs and plenty. Auſtin added dexterity to ſubmiſſiveneſs. My companion, whoſe name I now found to be Medlicote, was prone to converſe, and commented on the ſtate of the city like one whoſe reading had been extenſive, and experience large. He combatted an opinion which I had caſually formed reſpecting the origin of this epidemic, and imputed it not to infected ſubſtances imported from the Eaſt or Weſt, but to a morbid conſtitution of the atmoſphere, owing wholly, or in part, to filthy ſtreets, airleſs habitations, and ſqualid perſons.

As I talked with this man, the ſenſe of danger was obliterated; I felt confidence revive in my heart, and energy reviſit my ſtomach. Though far from my wonted health, my ſenſation grew leſs comfortleſs, and I found myſelf to ſtand in no need of repoſe.

Breakfaſt

Breakfaſt being finiſhed, my friend pleaded his daily engagements as reaſons for leaving me. He counſelled me to ſtrive for ſome repoſe, but I was conſcious of incapacity to ſleep. I was deſirous of eſcaping as ſoon as poſſible from this tainted atmoſphere, and reflected whether any thing remained to be done reſpecting Wallace.

It now occurred to me that this youth muſt have left ſome clothes and papers, and perhaps books. The property of theſe was now veſted in the Hadwins. I might deem myſelf, without preſumption, their repreſentative or agent;—might I not take ſome meaſures for obtaining poſſeſſion, or at leaſt for the ſecurity of theſe articles?

The houſe and its furniture was tenantleſs and unprotected; it was liable to be ranſacked and pillaged by thoſe deſperate ruffians, of whom many were ſaid to be hunting for ſpoil, even at a time like this. If theſe ſhould overlook this dwelling, Thetford's unknown ſucceſſor or heir might appropriate the whole. Numberleſs accidents might

might happen to occaſion the deſtruction or embezzlement of what belonged to Wallace, which might be prevented by the conduct which I ſhould now purſue.

Immerſed in theſe perplexities, I remained bewildered and motionleſs. I was at length rouſed by ſome one knocking at the door. Auſtin obeyed the ſignal, and inſtantly returned, leading in—Mr. Hadwin!

I know not whether this unlooked-for interview excited, on my part, moſt grief or ſurpriſe. The motive of his coming was eaſily divined. His journey was on two accounts ſuperfluous: he whom he ſought was dead—the duty of aſcertaining his condition I had aſſigned to myſelf.

I now perceived and deplored the error of which I had been guilty, in concealing my intended journey from my patron. Ignorant of the part I had acted, he had ruſhed into the jaws of this peſt, and endangered a life unſpeakably valuable to his children and friends. I ſhould doubtleſs have obtained his grateful conſent to the project which I had

had conceived; but my wretched policy had led me into this clandeſtine path. Secrecy may ſeldom be a crime:—a virtuous intention may produce it; but ſurely it is always erroneous and pernicious.

My friend's aſtoniſhment at the ſight of me was not inferior to my own. The cauſes which led to this unexpected interview were mutually explained. To ſooth the agonies of his child, he conſented to approach the city, and endeavour to procure intelligence of Wallace. When he left his houſe he intended to ſtop in the environs, and hire ſome emiſſary, whom an ample reward might tempt to enter the city, and procure the information which was needed.

No one could be prevailed upon to execute ſo dangerous a ſervice:—averſe to return without performing his commiſſion, he concluded to examine for himſelf. Thetford's removal to this ſtreet was known to him; but, being ignorant of my purpoſe, he had not mentioned this circumſtance to me during our laſt converſation.

I was

I was ſenſible of the danger which Hadwin had incurred by entering this city. Perhaps my knowledge, or the inexpreſſible importance of his life to the happineſs of his daughters, made me aggravate his danger. I knew that the longer he lingered in this tainted air, the hazard was increaſed; a moment's delay was unneceſſary; neither Wallace nor myſelf was capable of being benefited by his preſence.

I mentioned the death of his nephew as a reaſon for haſtening his departure. I urged him, in the moſt vehement terms, to remount his horſe, and to fly;—I endeavoured to preclude all enquiries reſpecting myſelf or Wallace, promiſing to follow him immediately, and anſwer all his queſtions at Malverton. My importunities were enforced by his own fears, and, after a moment's heſitation, he rode away.

The emotions produced by this incident were, in the preſent critical ſtate of my frame, eminently hurtful. My morbid indications ſuddenly returned. I had reaſon

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to aſcribe my condition to my viſit to the chamber of Maravegli; but this, and its conſequences to myſelf, as well as the journey of Hadwin, were the fruits of my unhappy ſecrecy.

I had always been accuſtomed to perform my journies on foot; this, on ordinary occaſions, was the preferable method, but now I ought to have adopted the eaſieſt and ſwifteſt means. If Hadwin had been acquainted with my purpoſe, he would not only have approved, but would have allowed me the uſe of a horſe. Theſe reflections were rendered leſs pungent by the recollection that my motives were benevolent, and that I had endeavoured to promote the benefit of others, by means which appeared to me moſt ſuitable.

Meanwhile, how was I to proceed?—What hindered me from purſuing the footſteps of Hadwin with all the expedition which my uneaſineſs of brain and ſtomach would allow?—I conceived that to leave any thing undone with regard to Wallace would be abſurd: his property might be put under

under the care of my new friend; but how was it to be distinguished from the property of others?—It was probably contained in trunks, which was designated by some label or mark. I was unacquainted with his chamber, but by passing from one to the other, I might finally discover it;—some token, directing my footsteps, might occur, though at present unforeseen.

Actuated by these considerations, I once more entered Thetford's habitation. I regretted that I had not procured the counsel or attendance of my new friend; but some engagements, the nature of which he did not explain, occasioned him to leave me as soon as breakfast was finished.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A SCENE OF HORROR.

I WANDERED over this deſerted manſion in a conſiderable degree at random. Effluvia of a peſtilential nature aſſailed me from every corner. In the front room of the ſecond ſtory, I imagined that I diſcovered veſtiges of that cataſtrophe which the paſt night had produced: the bed appeared as if ſome one had recently been dragged from it; the ſheets were tinged with yellow, and with that ſubſtance which is ſaid to be characteriſtic of this diſeaſe—the gangrenous or

o black vomit. The floor exhibited fimilar ſtains.

There are many who will regard my proceedings as the laſt refinement of temerity, or of heroiſm. Nothing, indeed, more perplexes me than a review of my own conduct. Not indeed that death is an object always to be dreaded, or that my motive did not juſtify my actions; but of all dangers, thoſe allied to peſtilence, by being myſterious and unſeen, are the moſt formidable. To diſarm them of their terrors, requires the longeſt familiarity. Nurſes and phyſicians ſooneſt become intrepid or indifferent; but the reſt of mankind recoil from the ſcene with unconquerable loathing.

I was ſuſtained, not by confidence of ſafety, and a belief of exemption from this malady, or by the influence of habit, which inures us to all that is deteſtable or perilous, but by a belief that this was as eligible an avenue to death as any other, and that life is a trivial ſacrifice in the cauſe of duty.

I paſſed

I paſſed from one room to the other. A portmanteau, marked with the initials of Wallace's name, at length attracted my notice; from this circumſtance I inferred that this apartment had been occupied by him. The room was neatly arranged, and appeared as if no one had lately uſed it: there were trunks and drawers; that which I have mentioned, was the only one that bore marks of Wallace's property;—this I lifted in my arms, with a view to remove it to Medlicote's houſe.

At that moment methought I heard a footſtep ſlowly and lingeringly aſcending the ſtairs. I was diſconcerted at this incident. The footſtep had in it a ghoſtlike ſolemnity and tardineſs. This phantom vaniſhed in a moment, and yielded place to other conjectures.—A human being approached, whoſe office and commiſſion were inſcrutable. That we were ſtrangers to each other was eaſily imagined; but how would my appearance in this remote chamber, and loaded with another's property, be interpreted?—

Did

Did he enter the houſe after me, or was he the tenant of ſome chamber hitherto unviſited, whom my entrance had awakened from his trance, and called from his couch?

In the confuſion of my mind I ſtill held my burthen uplifted. To have placed it on the floor, and encountered this viſitant, without this equivocal token about me, was the obvious proceeding. Indeed time only could decide whether theſe footſteps were directed to this, or to ſome other apartment.

My doubts were quickly diſpelled: the door opened, and a figure glided in!—The portmanteau dropped from my arms, and my heart's blood was chilled. If an apparition of the dead were poſſible, and that poſſibility I could not deny, this was ſuch an apparition!—A hue yellowiſh and livid—bones uncovered with fleſh—eyes ghaſtly, hollow, woe-begone, and fixed in an agony of wonder upon me—and locks matted and negligent, conſtituted the image which I now beheld. My belief of ſomewhat preternatural in this appearance, was confirmed

by recollection of reſemblances between theſe features and thoſe of one who was dead. In this ſhape and viſage, ſhadowy and death-like as they were, the lineaments of Wallace—of him who had miſled my ruſtic ſimplicity on my firſt viſit to this city, and whoſe death I had conceived to be inconteſtably aſcertained, were forcibly recogniſed.

This recognition, which at firſt alarmed my ſuperſtition, ſpeedily led to more rational inferences. Wallace had been dragged to the hoſpital;—nothing was leſs to be ſuſpected than that he would return alive from that hideous receptacle, but this was by no means impoſſible. The figure that ſtood before me, had juſt riſen from the bed of ſickneſs, and from the brink of the grave;—the criſis of his malady had paſſed, and he was once more entitled to be ranked among the living.

This event, and the conſequences which my imagination connected with it, filled me with the livelieſt joy. I thought not of his

ignorance

ignorance of the cauſes of my ſatisfaction—of the doubts to which the circumſtances of our interview would give birth, reſpecting the integrity of my purpoſe. I forgot the artifices by which I had formerly been betrayed, and the embarraſſments which a meeting with the victim of his artifices would excite in him;—I thought only of the happineſs which his recovery would confer upon his uncle and his couſins.

I advanced towards him with an air of congratulation, and offered him my hand. He ſhrunk back, and exclaimed in a feeble voice—"Who are you?—What buſineſs have you here?"

"I am the friend of Wallace, if he will allow me to be ſo. I am a meſſenger from your uncle and couſins at Malverton. I came to know the cauſe of your ſilence, and to afford you any aſſiſtance in my power."

He continued to regard me with an air of ſuſpicion and doubt; theſe I endeavoured to remove by explaining the motives that led me hither. It was with difficulty that he

seemed to credit my representations. When thoroughly convinced of the truth of my assertions, he enquired, with great anxiety and tenderness, concerning his relations, and expressed his hope that they were ignorant of what had befallen him.

I could not encourage his hopes;—I regretted my own precipitation in adopting the belief of his death. This belief had been uttered with confidence, and without stating my reasons for embracing it, to Mr. Hadwin. These tidings would be borne to his daughters, and their grief would be exasperated to a deplorable, and perhaps to a fatal degree.

There was but one method of repairing or eluding this mischief: intelligence ought to be conveyed to them of his recovery;—but where was the messenger to be found? No one's attention could be found disengaged from his own concerns;—those who were able or willing to leave the city, had sufficient motives for departure in relation to themselves. If vehicle or horse were procurable

curable for money, ought it not to be secured for the use of Wallace himself, whose wealth required the easiest and speediest conveyance from this theatre of death?

My companion was powerless in mind as in limbs: he seemed unable to consult upon the means of escaping from the inconveniences by which he was surrounded. As soon as sufficient strength was regained, he had left the hospital. To repair to Malverton was the measure which prudence obviously dictated; but he was hopeless of effecting it. The city was close at hand; this was his usual home, and hither his tottering and almost involuntary steps had conducted him.

He listened to my representations and counsels, and acknowledged their propriety. He put himself under my protection and guidance, and promised to conform implicitly to my directions. His strength had sufficed to bring him thus far, but was now utterly exhausted. The task of searching for a carriage and horse devolved upon me.

In effecting this purpoſe, I was obliged to rely upon my own ingenuity and diligence. Wallace, though ſo long a reſident in the city, knew not to whom I could apply, or by whom carriages were let to hire. My own reflections taught me that this accommodation was moſt likely to be furniſhed by innkeepers; or that ſome of thoſe might at leaſt inform me of the beſt meaſures to be taken. I reſolved to ſet out immediately on this ſearch. Meanwhile, Wallace was perſuaded to take refuge in Medlicote's apartments; and to make, by the aſſiſtance of Auſtin, the neceſſary preparation for his journey.

The morning had now advanced; the rays of a ſultry ſun had a ſickening and enfeebling influence, beyond any which I had ever experienced. The drought of unuſual duration had bereft the air and the earth of every particle of moiſture. The element which I breathed appeared to have ſtagnated into noxiouſneſs and putrefaction. I was aſtoniſhed at obſerving the enormous diminution

nution of my ſtrength: my brows were heavy, my intellects benumbed, my ſinews enfeebled, and my ſenſations univerſally unquiet.

Theſe prognoſtics were eaſily interpreted. What I chiefly dreaded was, that they would diſable me from executing the taſk which I had undertaken. I ſummoned up all my reſolution, and cheriſhed a diſdain of yielding to this ignoble deſtiny. I reflected that the ſource of all energy, and even of life, is ſeated in thought; that nothing is arduous to human efforts; that the external frame will ſeldom languiſh, while actuated by an unconquerable ſoul.

I fought againſt my dreary feelings which pulled me to the earth. I quickened my pace, raiſed my drooping eyelids, and hummed a cheerful and favourite air. For all that I accompliſhed during this day, I believe myſelf indebted to the ſtrenuouſneſs and ardour of my reſolutions.

I went from one tavern to another: one was deſerted; in another the people were ſick,

and their attendants refuſed to hearken to my enquiries or offers; at a third, their horſes were engaged. I was determined to proſecute my ſearch as long as an inn or a livery-ſtable remained unexamined, and my ſtrength would permit.

To detail the events of this expedition, the arguments and ſupplications which I uſed to overcome the dictates of avarice and fear, the fluctuation of my hopes, and my inceſſant diſappointments, would be uſeleſs. Having exhauſted all my expedients ineffectually, I was compelled to turn my weary ſteps once more to Medlicote's lodgings.

My meditations were deeply engaged by the preſent circumſtances of my ſituation. Since the means which were firſt ſuggeſted were impracticable, I endeavoured to inveſtigate others. Wallace's debility made it impoſſible for him to perform his journey on foot; but would not his ſtrength and his reſolution ſuffice to carry him beyond Schuylkill?—A carriage or horſe, though not

not to be obtained in the city, could without difficulty be procured in the country. Every farmer had beasts for burthen and draught; one of these might be hired at no immoderate expence for half a day.

This project appeared so practicable and so specious, that I deeply regretted the time and the efforts which had already been so fruitlessly expended. If my project, however, had been mischievous, to review it with regret was only to prolong and multiply its mischiefs. I trusted that time and strength would not be wanting to the execution of this new design.

On entering Medlicote's house, my looks, which in spite of my languors were sprightly and confident, flattered Wallace with the belief that my exertions had succeeded. When acquainted with their failure, he sunk as quickly into hopelessness. My new expedient was heard by him with no marks of satisfaction. It was impossible, he said, to move from this spot by his own strength.

All his powers were exhauſted by his walk from Buſh-hill.

I endeavoured, by arguments and railleries, to revive his courage. The pure air of the country would exhilarate him into new life. He might ſtop at every fifty yards, and reſt upon the green ſod. If overtaken by the night, we would procure a lodging by addreſs and importunity; but if every door ſhould be ſhut againſt us, we ſhould at leaſt enjoy the ſhelter of ſome barn, and might diet wholeſomely upon the new-laid eggs that we ſhould find there. The worſt treatment we could meet with, was better than continuance in the city.

Theſe remonſtrances had ſome influence, and he at length conſented to put his ability to the teſt. Firſt, however, it was neceſſary to invigorate himſelf by a few hours' reſt; to this, though with infinite reluctance, I conſented.

This interval allowed him to reflect upon the paſt, and enquire into the fate of Thetford

and

and his family. The intelligence, which Medlicote had enabled me to afford him, was heard with more satisfaction than regret. The ingratitude and cruelty with which he had been treated, seemed to have extinguished every sentiment but hatred and vengeance. I was willing to profit by this interval, to know more of Thetford than I already possessed. I enquired why Wallace had so perversely neglected the advice of his uncle and cousin, and persisted to brave so many dangers, when flight was so easy.

"I cannot justify my conduct," answered he; "it was in the highest degree thoughtless and perverse. I was confident and unconcerned as long as our neighbourhood was free from disease, and as long as I forbore any communication with the sick; yet I should have withdrawn to Malverton, merely to gratify my friends, if Thetford had not used the most powerful arguments to detain me. He laboured to extenuate the danger.

'Why not ſtay,' ſaid he, 'as long as I and my family continue?—Do you think that we would linger here, if the danger were imminent?—As ſoon as it becomes ſo, we will fly. You know that we have a country-houſe prepared for our reception;—when we go, you ſhall accompany us. Your ſervices at this time are indiſpenſable to my affairs. If you will not deſert me, your ſalary next year ſhall be double; and that will enable you to marry your couſin immediately. Nothing is more improbable than that any of us ſhould be ſick; but if this ſhould happen to you, I plight my honour that you ſhall be carefully and faithfully attended.'

"Theſe aſſurances were ſolemn and generous. To make Suſan Hadwin my wife, was the ſcope of all my wiſhes and labours. By ſtaying I ſhould haſten this deſirable event, and incur little hazard—by going, I ſhould alienate the affections of Thetford; by whom, it is but juſtice to acknowledge, that I had hitherto been treated with unexampled generoſity

generosity and kindness; and blast all the schemes I had formed for rising into wealth.

"My resolution was by no means stedfast: as often as a letter from Malverton arrived, I felt myself disposed to hasten away; but this inclination was combated by new arguments and new entreaties of Thetford.

"In this state of suspense, the girl, by whom Mrs. Thetford's infant was nursed, fell sick. She was an excellent creature, and merited better treatment than she received: like me, she resisted the persuasions of her friends, but her motives for remaining were disinterested and heroic.

"No sooner did her indisposition appear, than she was hurried to the hospital. I saw that no reliance could be placed upon the assurances of Thetford;—every consideration gave way to his fear of death. After the girl's departure, though he knew that she was led by his means to execution, yet he consoled himself with repeating and believing her assertions—that her disease was not the fever.

" I was now greatly alarmed for my own ſafety. I was determined to encounter his anger, and repel his perſuaſions, and to depart with the market-man next morning. That night, however, I was ſeized with a violent fever. I knew in what manner patients were treated at the hoſpital, and removal thither was to the laſt degree abhorred.

" The morning arrived, and my ſituation was diſcovered. At the firſt intimation, Thetford ruſhed out of the houſe, and refuſed to re-enter it till I was removed. I knew not my fate till three ruffians made their appearance at my bedſide, and communicated their commiſſion.

" I called on the name of Thetford and his wife;—I entreated a moment's delay, till I had ſeen theſe perſons, and endeavoured to procure a reſpite from my ſentence.—They were deaf to my entreaties, and prepared to execute their office by force.—I was delirious with rage and with terror. I heaped the bittereſt execrations on my murderer; and by turns invoked the compaſſion, and poured

a torrent of reproaches on the wretches whom he had selected for his ministers.—My struggles and outcries were vain.

" I have no perfect recollection of what passed, till my arrival at the hospital. My passions combined with my disease to make me frantic and wild. In a state like mine, the slightest motion could not be endured without agony; what then must I have felt, scorched and dazzled by the sun, sustained by hard boards, and borne for miles over a rugged pavement?

" I cannot make you comprehend the anguish of my feelings:—to be disjointed, and torn piece-meal by the rack, was a torment inexpressibly inferior to this. Nothing excites my wonder, but that I did not expire before the cart had moved three paces.

" I knew not how, or by whom I was moved from this vehicle;—insensibility came at length to my relief. After a time I opened my eyes, and slowly gained some knowledge of my situation:—I lay upon a mattress, whose condition proved that a half-decayed

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decayed corpſe had recently been dragged from it. The room was large, but it was covered with beds like my own; between each there was ſcarcely the interval of three feet; each ſuſtained a wretch, whoſe groans and diſtortions beſpoke the deſperateneſs of his condition.

"The atmoſphere was loaded by mortal ſtenches. A vapour, ſuffocating and malignant, ſcarcely allowed me to breathe. No ſuitable receptacle was provided for the evacuations produced by medicine or diſeaſe. My neareſt neighbour was ſtruggling with death; and my bed, caſually extended, was moiſt with the deteſtable matter which had flowed from his ſtomach.

"You will ſcarcely believe that, in this ſcene of horrors, the ſound of laughter ſhould be overheard. While the upper rooms of this building are filled with the ſick and the dying, the lower apartments are the ſcene of carouſals and mirth. The wretches who are hired, at enormous wages, to tend the ſick, and convey away the dead, neglect

neglect their duty, and consume the cordials which are provided for the patients, in debauchery and riot.

" A female visage, bloated with malignity and drunkenness, occasionally looked in: dying eyes were cast upon her, invoking the boon, perhaps, of a drop of cold water; or her assistance to change a posture, which compelled him to behold the ghastly writhings or deathful smile of his neighbour.

" The visitant had left the banquet for a moment, only to see who was dead. If she entered the room, blinking eyes and reeling steps shewed her to be totally unqualified for ministering the aid that was needed.—Presently she disappeared, and others ascended the staircase; a coffin was deposited at the door--the wretch, whose heart still quivered, was seized by rude hands, and dragged along the floor into the passage.

" Oh! how poor are the conceptions which are formed by the fortunate few, of the sufferings to which millions of their fellow-beings are condemned! This misery was more

more frightful, becauſe it was ſeen to flow from the depravity of the attendants. My own eyes only would make me credit the exiſtence of wickedneſs ſo enormous. No wonder that to die in garrets, and cellars, and ſtables, unviſited and unknown, had by ſo many been preferred to being brought hither.

" A phyſician caſt an eye upon my ſtate; he gave ſome directions to the perſon who attended him. I did not comprehend them —they were never executed by the nurſes; and if the attempt had been made, I ſhould probably have refuſed to receive what was offered. Recovery was equally beyond my expectations and my wiſhes. The ſcene which was hourly diſplayed before me—the entrance of the ſick, moſt of whom periſhed in a few hours, and their departure to the graves prepared for them, reminded me of the fate to which I alſo was reſerved.

" Three days paſſed away, in which every hour was expected to be the laſt. That amidſt an atmoſphere ſo contagious and deadly

deadly—amidſt cauſes of deſtruction hourly accumulating, I ſhould yet ſurvive, appears to me nothing leſs than miraculous;—that of ſo many conducted to this houſe, the only one who paſſed out of it alive ſhould be myſelf, almoſt ſurpaſſes my belief.

"Some inexplicable principle rendered harmleſs thoſe potent enemies of human life. My fever ſubſided and vaniſhed. My ſtrength was revived; and the firſt uſe that I made of my limbs, was to bear me far from the contemplation and ſufferance of thoſe evils."

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

A VISIT TO FORMER SCENES.

HAVING gratified my curiosity in this respect, Wallace proceeded to remind me of the circumstances of our first interview.—He had entertained doubts whether I was the person whom he had met at Lesher's. I acknowledged myself to be the same, and enquired, in my turn, into the motives of his conduct on that occasion.

"I confess," said he, with some hesitation, "I meant only to sport with your simplicity and ignorance. You must not imagine, however, that my stratagem was deep-

deep-laid and deliberately executed. My profeſſions at the tavern were ſincere;—I meant not to injure, but to ſerve you. It was not till I reached the head of the ſtaircaſe, that the miſchievous contrivance occurred. I foreſaw nothing at the moment but ludicrous miſtakes and embarraſſment:—the ſcheme was executed almoſt at the very moment it occurred.

"After I had returned to the parlour, Thetford charged me with the delivery of a meſſage in a diſtant quarter of the city. It was not till I had performed this commiſſion, and had ſet out on my return, that I fully revolved the conſequences likely to flow from my project.

"That Thetford and his wife would detect you in their bedchamber, was unqueſtionable. Perhaps, weary of my long delay, you would have fairly undreſſed and gone to bed. The married couple would have made preparation to follow you; and, when the curtain was undrawn, would diſcover a robuſt

youth

youth fast asleep in their place.—These images, which had just before excited my laughter, now produced a very different emotion: I dreaded some fatal catastrophe from the fiery passions of Thetford. In the first transports of his fury he might pistol you, or at least might command you to be dragged to prison.

"I now heartily repented of my jest, and hastened home that I might prevent, as far as possible, the evil effects that might flow from it. The acknowledgment of my own agency in this affair would at least transfer Thetford's indignation to myself, to whom it was equitably due.

"The married couple had retired to their chamber, and no alarm or confusion had followed;—this was an inexplicable circumstance. I waited with impatience till the morning should furnish a solution of the difficulty. The morning arrived. A strange event had indeed taken place in their bed-chamber: they found an infant asleep in their

their bed. Thetford had been roufed twice in the night—once by a noife in the clofet, and afterwards by a noife at the door.

" Some connection between thefe founds and the foundling was naturally fufpected. In the morning the clofet was examined, and a coarfe pair of fhoes was found on the floor; the chamber-door, which Thetford had locked in the evening, was difcovered to be open, as likewife a window in the kitchen.

" Thefe appearances were a fource of wonder and doubt to others, but were perfectly intelligible to me. I rejoiced that my ftratagem had no more dangerous conſequence, and admired the ingenuity and perſeverance with which you had extricated yourſelf from ſo critical a ſtate."

This narrative was only the verification of my own conjectures. Its facts were quickly ſupplanted in my thoughts by the diſaſtrous picture he had drawn of the ſtate of the hoſpital. I was confounded and ſhocked by the magnitude of this evil;—the cauſe of it

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was obvious: the wretches whom money could purchaſe, were of courſe licentious and unprincipled; ſuperintended and controuled, they might be uſeful inſtruments, but that ſuperintendence could not be bought.

What qualities were requiſite in the governor of ſuch an inſtitution?—He muſt have zeal, diligence, and perſeverance;—he muſt act from lofty and pure motives;—he muſt be mild and firm, intrepid and compliant. One perfectly qualified for the office it is deſirable, but not poſſible, to find. A diſpaſſionate and honeſt zeal in the cauſe of duty and humanity may be of eminent utility. Am I not endowed with this zeal? Cannot my feeble efforts obviate ſome portion of this evil?

No one has hitherto claimed this diſguſtful and perilous ſituation. My powers and diſcernment are ſmall; but if they be honeſtly exerted, they cannot fail to be ſomewhat beneficial.

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The impulſe produced by theſe reflections was to haſten to the City Hall, and make known my wiſhes. This impulſe was controuled by recollections of my own indiſpoſition, and of the ſtate of Wallace. To deliver this youth to his friends, was the ſtrongeſt obligation; when this was diſcharged, I might return to the city, and acquit myſelf of more comprehenſive duties.

Wallace had now enjoyed a few hours' reſt, and was perſuaded to begin the journey. It was now noon-day, and the ſun darted inſupportable rays. Wallace was more ſenſible than myſelf of their unwholeſome influence. We had not reached the ſuburbs when his ſtrength was wholly exhauſted; and, had I not ſupported him, he would have ſunk upon the pavement.

My limbs were ſcarcely leſs weak, but my reſolutions were much more ſtrenuous than his; I made light of his indiſpoſition, and endeavoured to perſuade him that his vigour would return in proportion to his diſtance from the city. The moment we

ſhould

ſhould reach a ſhade, a ſhort reſpite would reſtore us to health and cheerfulneſs.

Nothing could revive his courage, or induce him to go on;—to return, or to proceed was equally impracticable. But, ſhould he be able to return, where ſhould he find a retreat?—The danger of relapſe was imminent:—his own chamber at Thetford's was unoccupied. If he could regain this houſe, might I not procure him a phyſician, and perform for him the part of nurſe.

His preſent ſituation was critical and mournful. To remain in the ſtreet, expoſed to the malignant fervours of the ſun, was not to be endured. To carry him in my arms, exceeded my ſtrength. Should I not claim the aſſiſtance of the firſt paſſenger that appeared?

At that moment a horſe and chaiſe paſſed us. The vehicle proceeded at a quick pace. He that rode in it, might afford us the ſuccour that we needed. He might be perſuaded to deviate from his courſe, and convey the helpleſs Wallace to the houſe we had juſt left.

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This thought inſtantly impelled me forward. Feeble as I was, I even ran with ſpeed, in order to overtake the vehicle. My purpoſe was effected with the utmoſt difficulty. It fortunately happened that the carriage contained but one perſon, who ſtopped at my requeſt: his countenance and guiſe were mild and encouraging.

"Good friend," I exclaimed, "here is a young man too indiſpoſed to walk;—I want him carried to his lodgings. Will you, for money or for charity, allow him a place in your chaiſe, and ſet him down where I ſhall direct?"—Obſerving tokens of heſitation, I continued—"You need have no fears to perform this office;—he is not ſick, but merely feeble. I will not aſk twenty minutes, and you may aſk what reward you think proper."

Still he heſitated to comply. His buſineſs, he ſaid, had not led him into the city; he merely paſſed along the ſkirts of it, whence he conceived that no danger would ariſe. He was deſirous of helping the

unfortunate, but he could not think of risking his own life in the cause of a stranger, when he had a wife and children depending on his existence and exertions for bread. It gave him pain to refuse; but he thought his duty to himself and to others required that he should not hazard his safety by compliance.

This plea was irresistible. The mildness of his manner shewed that he might have been overpowered by persuasion, or tempted by reward. I would not take advantage of his tractability; but should have declined his assistance, even if it had been spontaneously offered. I turned away from him in silence, and prepared to return to the spot where I had left my friend. The man now resumed his way.

In this perplexity, the thought occurred to me that, since this person was going into the country, he might possibly consent to carry Wallace with him. I confided greatly in the salutary influence of rural airs. I believed that debility constituted the whole

of

of his complaint; that continuance in the city might occaſion his relapſe, or at leaſt procraſtinate his reſtoration.

I once more addreſſed myſelf to the traveller, and enquired in what direction, and how far he was going. To my unſpeakable ſatisfaction, his anſwer informed me that his home lay beyond Mr. Hadwin's, and that his road carried him directly paſt that gentleman's door. He was willing to receive Wallace into his chaiſe, and to leave him at his uncle's.

This joyous and auſpicious occurrence ſurpaſſed my fondeſt hopes. I hurried with the pleaſing tidings to Wallace, who eagerly conſented to enter the carriage. I thought not at the moment of myſelf, or how far the ſame means of eſcaping from my danger might be uſed. The ſtranger could not be anxious on my account; and Wallace's dejection and weakneſs may apologize for his not ſoliciting my company, or expreſſing his fears for my ſafety. He was no ſooner ſeated than the traveller hurried away. I

gazed after them, motionleſs and mute, till the carriage, turning a corner, paſſed beyond my ſight.

I had now leiſure to revert to my own condition, and to ruminate on that ſeries of abrupt and diverſified events that had happened during the few hours which had been paſſed in the city: the end of my coming was thus ſpeedily and ſatisfactorily accompliſhed. My hopes and fears had rapidly fluctuated; but, reſpecting this young man, had now ſubſided into calm and propitious certainty. Before the decline of the ſun, he would enter his paternal roof, and diffuſe ineffable joy throughout that peaceful and chaſte aſylum.

This contemplation, though rapturous and ſoothing, ſpeedily gave way to reflections on the conduct which my duty required, and the ſafe departure of Wallace afforded me liberty to purſue. To offer myſelf as a ſuperintendent of the hoſpital, was ſtill my purpoſe. The languors of my frame might terminate in ſickneſs; but this

event it was useless to anticipate. The lofty site and pure airs of Bush-hill might tend to dissipate my languors, and restore me to health. At least, while I had power, I was bound to exert it to the wisest purposes. I resolved to seek the City Hall immediately, and for that end crossed the intermediate fields which separated Sassafras from Chesnut-street.

More urgent considerations had diverted my attention from the money which I bore about me, and from the image of the desolate lady to whom it belonged. My intentions with regard to her were the same as ever; but now it occurred to me with new force, that my death might preclude an interview between us, and that it was prudent to dispose, in some useful way, of the money which would otherwise be left to the sport of chance.

The evils which had befallen this city were obvious and enormous. Hunger and negligence had exasperated the malignity, and facilitated the progress of the pestilence.

Could this money be more uſefully employed than in alleviating theſe evils?—During my life I had no power over it; but my death would juſtify me in preſcribing the courſe which it ſhould take.

How was this courſe to be pointed out?—How might I place it, ſo that I ſhould effect my intentions without relinquiſhing the poſſeſſion during my life?

Theſe thoughts were ſuperſeded by a tide of new ſenſations. The weight that incommoded my brows and my ſtomach was ſuddenly increaſed. My brain was uſurped by ſome benumbing power, and my limbs refuſed to ſupport me. My pulſations were quickened, and the prevalence of fever could no longer be doubted.

Till now, I had entertained a faint hope that my indiſpoſition would vaniſh of itſelf. This hope was at an end. The grave was before me, and my projects of curioſity or benevolence were to ſink into oblivion. I was not bereaved of the powers of reflection. The conſequences of lying in the road, friendleſs

friendleſs and unprotected, were ſure: the firſt paſſenger would notice me, and haſten to ſummon one of thoſe carriages which are buſy, night and day, in tranſporting its victims to the hoſpital.

This fate was, beyond all others, abhorrent to my imagination. To hide me under ſome roof, where my exiſtence would be unknown and unſuſpected, and where I might periſh unmoleſted and in quiet, was my preſent wiſh. Thetford's or Medlicote's might afford me ſuch an aſylum, if it were poſſible to reach it.

I made the moſt ſtrenuous exertions, but they could not carry me forward more than a hundred paces; here I reſted on ſteps, which, on looking up, I perceived to belong to Welbeck's houſe.

This incident was unexpected. It led my reflections into a new train. To go farther, in the preſent condition of my frame, was impoſſible. I was well acquainted with this dwelling. All its avenues were cloſed. Whether it had remained unoccupied ſince

my flight from it, I could not decide;—it was evident that at preſent it was without inhabitants. Poſſibly it might have continued in the ſame condition in which Welbeck had left it: beds or ſofas might be found, on which a ſick man might reſt, and be fearleſs of intruſion.

This inference was quickly overturned by the obvious ſuppoſition that every avenue was bolted and locked; this, however, might not be the condition of the bath-houſe, in which there was nothing that required to be guarded with unuſual precautions. I was ſuffocated by inward, and ſcorched by external heat; and the relief of bathing and drinking appeared ineſtimable.

The value of this prize, in addition to my deſire to avoid the obſervation of paſſengers, made me exert all my remnant of ſtrength; repeated efforts at length enabled me to mount the wall, and placed me, as I imagined, in ſecurity. I ſwallowed large draughts of water as ſoon as I could reach the well.

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The effect was for a time salutary and delicious. My fervours were abated, and my faculties relieved from the weight which had lately oppressed them. My present condition was unspeakably more advantageous than the former;—I did not believe that it could be improved, till, casting my eye vaguely over the building, I happened to observe the shutters of a lower window partly opened.

Whether this was occasioned by design or by accident, there were no means of deciding. Perhaps, in the precipitation of the latest possessor, this window had been overlooked;—perhaps it had been unclosed by violence, and afforded entrance to a robber. By what means soever it had happened, it undoubtedly afforded ingress to me. I felt no scruple in profiting by this circumstance. My purposes were not dishonest. I should not injure or purloin any thing. It was laudable to seek a refuge from the well-meant persecutions of those who governed the city. All I sought was the privilege of dying alone.

Having entered at the window, I could not but remark that the furniture and its arrangements had undergone no alteration in my abſence. I moved ſoftly from one apartment to another, till at length I entered that which had formerly been Welbeck's bedchamber.

The bed was naked of covering; the cabinets and cloſets exhibited their faſtenings broken—their contents were gone. Whether theſe appearances had been produced by midnight robbers, or by the miniſters of law, and the rage of the creditors of Welbeck, was a topic of fruitleſs conjecture.

My deſign was now effected: this chamber ſhould be the ſcene of my diſeaſe, and my refuge from the charitable cruelty of my neighbours. My new ſenſations conjured up the hope that my indiſpoſition might prove a temporary evil;—inſtead of peſtilential, or malignant fever, it might be a harmleſs intermittent. Time would aſcertain its true nature; meanwhile, I turned the carpet into a coverlet, ſupplying my pitcher with

with water, and administered, without sparing and without fear, that remedy which was placed within my reach.

CHAP. IV.

MYSTERY.

I LAID myself on the bed, and wrapped my limbs in the folds of the carpet. My thoughts were restless and perturbed. I was once more busy in reflecting on the conduct which I ought to pursue, with regard to the bank-bills. I weighed, with scrupulous attention, every circumstance that might influence my decision. I could not conceive any more beneficial application of this

property, than to the ſervice of the indigent at this ſeaſon of multiplied diſtreſs; but I conſidered that if my death were unknown, the houſe would not be opened or examined till the peſtilence had ceaſed, and the benefits of this application would thus be partly or wholly precluded.

This ſeaſon of diſeaſe, however, would give place to a ſeaſon of ſcarcity. The number and wants of the poor, during the enſuing winter, would be deplorably aggravated. What multitudes might be reſcued from famine and nakedneſs by the judicious application of this ſum?

But how ſhould I ſecure this application? —To encloſe the bills in a letter, directed to ſome eminent citizen or public officer, was the obvious proceeding. Both of theſe conditions were fulfilled in the perſon of the preſent chief magiſtrate; to him, therefore, the packet was to be ſent.

Paper and the implements for writing were neceſſary for this end. Would they be found, I aſked, in the upper room?—If that apartment,

apartment, like the reſt which I had ſeen, and its furniture had remained untouched, my taſk would be practicable; but if the means of writing were not to be immediately procured, my purpoſe, momentous and dear as it was, muſt be relinquiſhed.

The truth in this reſpect was eaſily, and ought immediately to be aſcertained. I roſe from the bed, which I had lately taken, and proceeded to the ſtudy. The entries and ſtaircaſes were illuminated by a pretty ſtrong twilight. The rooms, in conſequence of every ray being excluded by the cloſed ſhutters, were nearly as dark as if it had been midnight. Thoſe into which I had already paſſed were locked, but its key was in each lock. I flattered myſelf that the entrance into the ſtudy would be found in the ſame condition. The door was ſhut, but no key was to be ſeen. My hopes were conſiderably damped by this appearance; but I conceived it to be ſtill poſſible to enter, ſince, by chance or by deſign, the door might be unlocked.

My

My fingers touched the lock, when a ſound was heard as if a bolt, appending to the door on the inſide, had been drawn. I was ſtartled by this incident. It betokened that the room was already occupied by ſome other, who deſired to exclude a viſitor. The unbarred ſhutter below was remembered, and aſſociated itſelf with this circumſtance. That this houſe ſhould be entered by the ſame avenue, at the ſame time, and this room ſhould be ſought by two perſons, was a myſterious concurrence.

I began to queſtion whether I had heard diſtinctly. Numberleſs inexplicable noiſes are apt to aſſail the ear in an empty dwelling; the very echoes of our ſteps are unwonted and new: this, perhaps, was ſome ſuch ſound. Reſuming courage, I once more applied to the lock. The door, in ſpite of my repeated efforts, would not open.

My deſign was too momentous to be readily relinquiſhed. My curioſity and my fears likewiſe were awakened. The marks of violence,

violence, which I had seen on the closets and cabinets below, seemed to indicate the presence of plunderers. Here was one who laboured for seclusion and concealment.

The pillage was not made upon my property. My weakness would disable me from encountering or mastering a man of violence. To solicit admission into this room, would be useless—to attempt to force my way, would be absurd. These reflections prompted me to withdraw from the door; but the uncertainty of the conclusions I had drawn, and the importance of gaining access to this apartment, combined to check my steps.

Perplexed as to the means I should employ, I once more tried the lock. This attempt was as fruitless as the former. Though hopeless of any information to be gained by that means, I put my eye to the keyhole: I discovered a light different from what was usually met with at this hour;—it was not the twilight which the sun, imperfectly excluded, produces, but gleams as from a lamp;

lamp; yet the gleams were fainter and obſcurer than a lamp generally imparts.

Was this a confirmation of my firſt conjecture?—Lamplight at noon-day, in a manſion thus deſerted, and in a room which had been the ſcene of memorable and diſaſtrous events, was ominous. Hitherto no direct proof had been given of the preſence of a human being;—how to aſcertain his preſence, or whether it were eligible by any means to aſcertain it, were points on which I had not deliberated.

I had no power to deliberate. My curioſity impelled me to call—"Is there any one within?—Speak!"

Theſe words were ſcarcely uttered, when ſome one exclaimed, in a voice vehement, but half-ſmothered—"Good God!"

A deep pauſe ſucceeded. I waited for an anſwer—for ſomewhat to which this emphatic invocation might be a prelude. Whether the tones were expreſſive of ſurpriſe, or pain, or grief, was for a moment dubious.

Perhaps

Perhaps the motives which led me to this house suggested the suspicion which presently succeeded to my doubts, that the person within was disabled by sickness. The circumstances of my own condition took away the improbability from this belief.—Why might not another be induced, like me, to hide himself in this desolate retreat?—Might not a servant, left to take care of the house—a measure usually adopted by the opulent at this time, be seized by the reigning malady?—Incapacitated for exertion, or fearing to be dragged to the hospital, he has shut himself in this apartment. The robber, it may be, who came to pillage, was overtaken, and detained by disease. In either case, detection or intrusion would be hateful, and would be assiduously eluded.

These thoughts had no tendency to weaken or divert my efforts to obtain access to this room. The person was a brother in calamity, whom it was my duty to succour and cherish to the utmost of my power. Once more I spoke.

"Who

"Who is within?—I beſeech you anſwer me. Whatever you be, I deſire to do you good, and not injury. Open the door, and let me know your condition. I will try to be of uſe to you."

I was anſwered by a deep groan, and by a ſob counteracted and devoured, as it were, by a mighty effort. This token of diſtreſs thrilled to my heart. My terrors wholly diſappeared, and gave place to unlimited compaſſion. I again entreated to be admitted, promiſing all the ſuccour or conſolation which my ſituation allowed me to afford.

Anſwers were made in tones of anger and impatience, blended with thoſe of grief.

"I want no ſuccour;—vex me not with your entreaties and offers. Fly from this ſpot;—linger not a moment, leſt you participate my deſtiny, and ruſh upon your death!"

Theſe I conſidered merely as the effuſions of delirium, or the dictates of deſpair. The ſtyle and articulation denoted the ſpeaker to be

be ſuperior to the claſs of ſervants; hence my anxiety to ſee and to aid him was increaſed. My remonſtrances were ſternly and pertinaciouſly repelled. For a time incoherent and impaſſioned exclamations flowed from him; at length I was only permitted to hear ſtrong aſpirations and ſobs, more eloquent, and more indicative of grief than any language.

This deportment filled me with no leſs wonder than commiſeration. By what views this perſon was led hither—by what motives induced to deny himſelf to my entreaties, was wholly incomprehenſible. Again, though hopeleſs of ſucceſs, I repeated my requeſt to be admitted.

My perſeverance ſeemed now to have exhauſted all his patience, and he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder—"Arthur Mervyn, begone!—Linger but a moment, and my rage, tiger-like, will ruſh upon you, and rend you limb from limb!"

This addreſs petrified me. The voice that uttered this ſanguinary menace was ſtrange

ſtrange to my ears; it ſuggeſted no ſuſpicion of ever having heard it before. Yet my accents had betrayed me to him; he was familiar with my name. Notwithſtanding the improbability of my entrance into this dwelling, I was clearly recogniſed, and unheſitatingly named!

My curioſity and compaſſion were in no wiſe diminiſhed, but I found myſelf compelled to give up my purpoſe:—I withdrew reluctantly from the door, and once more threw myſelf upon my bed. Nothing was more neceſſary, in the preſent condition of my frame, than ſleep; and ſleep had perhaps been poſſible, if the ſcene around me had been leſs pregnant with cauſes of wonder and panic.

Once more I taſked my memory in order to diſcover, in the perſons with whom I had hitherto converſed, ſome reſemblance in voice or tones to him whom I had juſt heard. This proceſs was effectual: gradually my imagination called up an image, which now, that it was clearly ſeen, I was aſtoniſhed had not

not inſtantly occurred.—Three years ago, a man, by name Colvill, came on foot, and with a knapſack on his back, into the diſtrict where my father reſided. He had learning and genius, and readily obtained the ſtation for which only he deemed himſelf qualified—that of a ſchoolmaſter.

His demeanour was gentle and modeſt; his habits, as to ſleep, food, and exerciſe, abſtemious and regular. Meditation in the foreſt, or reading in his cloſet, ſeemed to conſtitute, together with attention to his ſcholars, his ſole amuſement and employment. He eſtranged himſelf from company, not becauſe ſociety afforded no pleaſure, but becauſe ſtudious ſecluſion afforded him the greateſt ſatisfaction.

No one was more idolized by his unſuſpecting neighbours. His ſcholars revered him as a father, and made under his tuition a remarkable proficiency. His character ſeemed open to boundleſs inſpection, and his conduct was pronounced by all to be faultleſs.

At

At the end of a year the ſcene was changed. A daughter of one of his patrons, young, artleſs, and beautiful, appeared to have fallen a prey to the arts of ſome deteſtable ſeducer. The betrayer was gradually detected; and ſucceſſive diſcoveries ſhewed that the ſame artifices had been practiſed, with the ſame ſucceſs, upon many others. Colvill was the arch villain!—He retired from the ſtorm of vengeance that was gathering over him, and had not been heard of ſince that period.

I ſaw him rarely, and for a ſhort time; and I was a mere boy. Hence the failure to recollect his voice, and to perceive that the voice of him immured in the room above, was the ſame with that of Colvill. Though I had ſlight reaſons for recogniſing his features or accents, I had abundant cauſe to think of him with deteſtation, and purſue him with implacable revenge; for the victim of his arts, ſhe whoſe ruin was firſt detected, was—*my ſiſter!*

This unhappy girl eſcaped from the upbraidings of her parents, from the contumelies

of

of the world, from the goadings of remorse, and the anguish flowing from the perfidy and desertion of Colvill, in a voluntary death.—She was innocent and lovely. Previous to this evil, my soul was linked with her's by a thousand resemblances and sympathies, as well as by perpetual intercourse from infancy, and by the fraternal relation. She was my sister, my preceptress, and friend; but she died—her end was violent, untimely, and criminal!—I cannot think of her without heart-bursting grief—of her destroyer, without a rancour which I know to be wrong, but which I cannot subdue.

When the image of Colvill rushed upon this occasion on my thought, I almost started on my feet. To meet him, after so long a separation, here, and in these circumstances, was so unlooked-for and abrupt an event, and revived a tribe of such hateful impulses and agonizing recollections, that a total revolution seemed to have been effected in my frame. His recognition of my person, his aversion to be seen, his ejaculation of terror

and

and ſurpriſe on firſt hearing my voice, all contributed to ſtrengthen my belief.

How was I to act?—My feeble frame could but ill ſecond my vengeful purpoſes; but vengeance, though it ſometimes occupied my thoughts, was hindered by my reaſon from leading me in any inſtance to outrage, or even to upbraiding.

All my wiſhes with regard to this man were limitted to expelling his image from my memory, and to ſhunning a meeting with him. That he had not opened the door at my bidding, was now a topic of joy. To look upon ſome bottomleſs pit, into which I was about to be caſt headlong and alive, was leſs to be abhorred than to look upon the face of Colvill. Had I known that he had taken refuge in this houſe, no power ſhould have compelled me to enter it. To be immerſed in the infection of the hoſpital, and to be hurried, yet breathing and obſervant, to my grave, was a more ſupportable fate.

I dwell

I dwell with self-condemnation and shame upon this part of my story. To feel extraordinary indignation at vice, merely because we have partaken in an extraordinary degree of its mischiefs, is unjustifiable. To regard the wicked with no emotion but pity—to be active in reclaiming them, in controuling their malevolence, and preventing or repairing the ills which they produce, is the only province of duty. This lesson, as well as a thousand others, I have yet to learn; but I despair of living long enough for that, or any beneficial purpose.

My emotions with regard to Colvill were erroneous, but omnipotent. I started from my bed, and prepared to rush into the street. I was careless of the lot that should befall me, since no fate could be worse than that of abiding under the same roof with a wretch spotted with so many crimes.

I had not set my foot upon the floor, before my precipitation was checked by a sound from above. The door of the study was cautiously and slowly opened. This

incident admitted only of one conſtruction: ſuppoſing all obſtructions removed, Colvill was creeping from his hiding-place, and would probably fly with ſpeed from the houſe.—My belief of his ſickneſs was now confuted. An illicit deſign was congenial with his character, and congruous with thoſe appearances already obſerved.

I had no power or wiſh to obſtruct his flight. I thought of it with tranſport, and once more threw myſelf upon the bed, and wrapped my averted face in the carpet. He would probably paſs this door, unobſervant of me; and my muffled face would ſave me from the agonies connected with the ſight of him.

The footſteps above were diſtinguiſhable, though it was manifeſt that they moved with lightſomeneſs and circumſpection:—they reached the ſtairs, and deſcended. The room in which I lay was, like the reſt, obſcured by the cloſed ſhutters. This obſcurity now gave way to a light, reſembling that glimmering and pale reflection which I had noticed

noticed in the ſtudy. My eyes, though averted from the door, were diſengaged from the folds which covered the reſt of my head, and obſerved theſe tokens of Colvill's approach flitting on the wall.

My feveriſh perturbations increaſed as he drew nearer. He reached the door, and ſtopped. The light reſted for a moment. Preſently he entered the apartment. My emotions ſuddenly roſe to a height that would not be controuled. I imagined that he approached the bed, and was gazing upon me. At the ſame moment, by an involuntary impulſe, I threw off my covering, and, turning my face, fixed my eyes upon my viſitant.

It was as I ſuſpected: the figure, lifting in his right-hand a candle, and gazing at the bed, with lineaments and attitude beſpeaking fearful expectation and tormenting doubts, was now beheld. One glance communicated to my ſenſes all the parts of this terrific viſion:—a ſinking at my heart, as if it had been penetrated by a dagger, ſeized

me. This was not enough; I uttered a ſhriek too rueful and loud not to have ſtartled the attention of the paſſengers, if any had at that moment been paſſing the ſtreet.

Heaven ſeemed to have decreed that this period ſhould be filled with trials of my equanimity and fortitude. The teſt of my courage was once more employed to cover me with humiliation and remorſe. This ſecond time my fancy conjured up a ſpectre, and I ſhuddered as if the grave were forſaken, and the unquiet dead haunted my pillow.

The viſage and the ſhape had indeed preternatural attitudes, but they belonged not to Colvill, but to—WELBECK.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

A NARRATIVE.

HE whom I had accompanied to the midſt of the river—whom I had imagined that I ſaw ſink to riſe no more, was now before me. Though incapable of precluding the groundleſs belief of preternatural viſitations, I was able to baniſh the phantom almoſt at the ſame inſtant at which it appeared:—Welbeck had eſcaped from the ſtream alive, or had, by ſome inconceivable means, been reſtored to life.

The firſt was the moſt plauſible concluſion. It inſtantly engendered a ſuſpicion

that his plunging into the water was an artifice, intended to eſtabliſh a belief of his death. His own tale had ſhewn him to be verſed in frauds, and flexible to evil. But was he not aſſociated with Colvill?—and what, but a compact in iniquity, could bind together ſuch men?

While thus muſing, Welbeck's countenance and geſture diſplayed emotions too vehement for ſpeech. The glances that he fixed upon me were unſtedfaſt and wild. He walked along the floor, ſtopping at each moment, and darting looks of eagerneſs upon me. A conflict of paſſions kept him mute. At length advancing to the bed, on the ſide of which I was now ſitting, he addreſſed me:—

"What is this?—Are you here?—In defiance of peſtilence, are you actuated by ſome demon to haunt me like the ghoſt of my offences, and cover me with ſhame?—What have I to do with that dauntleſs, yet guileleſs front?—with that fooliſhly confiding and obſequious, yet erect and unconquerable

querable ſpirit?—Are there no means of evading your purſuit?—Muſt I dip my hands a ſecond time in blood, and dig for you a grave by the ſide of Watſon?"

Theſe words were liſtened to with calmneſs. I ſuſpected and pitied the man, but I did not fear him. His words and his looks were indicative leſs of cruelty than madneſs. I looked at him with an air compaſſionate and wiſtful. I ſpoke with mildneſs and compoſure.

"Mr. Welbeck, you are unfortunate and criminal.—Would to God I could reſtore you to happineſs and virtue; but though my deſire be ſtrong, I have no power to change your habits, or reſcue you from miſery.

"I believed you to be dead. I rejoice to find myſelf miſtaken. While you live, there is room to hope that your errors will be cured; and the turmoils and inquietudes that have hitherto beſet your guilty progreſs, will vaniſh by your reverting into better paths.

"From me you have nothing to fear. If your welfare will be promoted by my ſilence on the ſubject of your hiſtory, my ſilence ſhall be inviolate. I deem not lightly of my promiſes;—they are given, and ſhall not be recalled.

"This meeting was caſual. Since I believed you to be dead, it could not be otherwiſe. You err, if you ſuppoſe that any injury will accrue to you from my life; but you need not diſcard that error:—ſince my death is coming, I am not averſe to your adopting the belief that the event is fortunate to you.

"Death is the inevitable and univerſal lot. When, or how it comes, is of little moment. To ſtand when ſo many thouſands are falling around me, is not to be expected.—I have acted a humble and obſcure part in the world, and my career has been ſhort; but I murmur not at the decree that makes it ſo.

"The peſtilence is now upon me. The chances of recovery are too ſlender to deſerve my

my confidence. I came hither to die unmoleſted, and at peace. All I aſk of you is to conſult your own ſafety by immediate flight; and not to diſappoint my hopes of concealment, by diſcloſing my condition to the agents of the hoſpital."

Welbeck liſtened with the deepeſt attention: the wildneſs of his air diſappeared, and gave place to perplexity and apprehenſion.

"You are ſick," ſaid he, in a tremulous tone, in which terror was mingled with affection; "you know this, and expect not to recover. No mother, nor ſiſter, nor friend will be near to adminiſter food, or medicine, or comfort;—yet you can talk calmly, can be thus conſiderate of others—of me, whoſe guilt has been ſo deep, and who has merited ſo little at your hands!

"Wretched coward!—Thus miſerable as I am, and expect to be, I cling to life. To comply with your heroic counſel, and to fly—to leave you thus deſolate and helpleſs,

is the ſtrongeſt impulſe. Fain would I reſiſt it, but cannot.

" To deſert you, would be flagitious and daſtardly beyond all former acts; yet to ſtay with you is to contract the diſeaſe, and to periſh after you.

" Life, burthened as it is with guilt and ignominy, is ſtill dear;—yet you exhort me to go—you diſpenſe with my aſſiſtance.—Indeed I could be of no uſe—I ſhould injure myſelf, and profit you nothing. I cannot go into the city, and procure a phyſician or attendant. I muſt never more appear in the ſtreets of this city. I muſt leave you then."

He hurried to the door. Again he heſitated. I renewed my entreaties that he would leave me, and encouraged his belief that his preſence might endanger himſelf, without conferring the ſlighteſt benefit upon me.

" Whither ſhould I fly?—The wide world contains no aſylum for me. I lived

but

but on one condition. I came hither to find what would ſave me from ruin—from death. I find it not. It has vaniſhed. Some audacious and fortunate hand has ſnatched it from its place, and now my ruin is complete. My laſt hope is extinct!'

"Yes, Mervyn, I will ſtay with you!—I will hold your head—I will put water to your lips—I will watch night and day by your ſide. When you die, I will carry you by night to the neighbouring field—will bury you, and water your grave with thoſe tears that are due to your incomparable worth and untimely deſtiny. Then I will lay myſelf in your bed, and wait for the ſame oblivion."

Welbeck ſeemed now no longer to be fluctuating between oppoſite purpoſes. His tempeſtuous features ſubſided into calm. He put the candle, ſtill lighted, on the table, and paced the floor with leſs diſorder than at his firſt entrance.

His reſolution was ſeen to be the dictate of deſpair. I hoped that it would not prove

invincible to my remonſtrances. I was conſcious that his attendance might preclude, in ſome degree, my own exertions, and alleviate the pangs of death; but theſe conſolations might be purchaſed too dear. To receive them at the hazard of his life, would be to make them odious.

But if he ſhould remain, what conduct would his companion purſue?—Why did he continue in the ſtudy, when Welbeck had departed?—By what motives were thoſe men led hither?—I addreſſed myſelf to Welbeck.

"Your reſolution to remain is haſty and raſh. By perſiſting in it, you will add to the miſeries of my condition;—you will take away the only hope that I cheriſhed. But, however you may act, Colvill or I muſt be baniſhed from this roof. What is the league between you?—Break it, I conjure you, before his frauds have involved you in inextricable deſtruction!"

Welbeck looked at me with ſome expreſſion of doubt.

"I mean,"

"I mean," continued I, "the man whose voice I heard above. He is a villain and betrayer. I have manifold proofs of his guilt. Why does he linger behind you?—However you may decide, it is fitting that he should vanish."

"Alas!" said Welbeck, "I have no companion—none to partake with me in good or evil. I came hither alone."

"How?" exclaimed I. "Whom did I hear in the room above?—Some one answered my interrogations and entreaties, whom I too certainly recognised. Why does he remain?"

"You heard no one but myself. The design that brought me hither, was to be accomplished without a witness. I desired to escape detection, and repelled your solicitations for admission in a counterfeited voice.

"That voice belonged to one from whom I had lately parted. What his merits or demerits are, I know not. He found me wandering in the forests of New-Jersey. He took me to his home. When seized by a

lingering

lingering malady, he nurſed me with fidelity and tenderneſs. When ſomewhat recovered, I ſpeeded hither;—but our ignorance of each other's character and views was mutual and profound.

"I deemed it uſeful to aſſume a voice different from my own: this was the laſt which I had heard, and this arbitrary and caſual circumſtance decided my choice."

This imitation was too perfect, and had influenced my fears too ſtrongly, to be eaſily credited. I ſuſpected Welbeck of ſome new artifice to baffle my concluſions, and miſlead my judgment; this ſuſpicion, however, yielded to his earneſt and repeated declarations.—If Colvill were not here, where had he made his abode?—How came friendſhip and intercourſe between Welbeck and him?—By what miracle eſcaped the former from the river, into which I had imagined him for ever ſunk?

"I will anſwer you," ſaid he, "with candour. You know already too much for me to have any intereſt in concealing any

part

part of my life. You have discovered my existence; and the causes that rescued me from destruction may be told without detriment to my person or fame.

"When I leaped into the river, I intended to perish. I harboured no previous doubts of my ability to execute my fatal purpose. In this respect I was deceived. Suffocation would not come at my bidding. My muscles and limbs rebelled against my will. There was a mechanical repugnance to the loss of life, which I could not vanquish. My struggles might thrust me below the surface, but my lips were spontaneously shut, and excluded the torrent from my lungs. When my breath was exhausted, the efforts that kept me at the bottom were involuntarily remitted, and I rose to the surface.

"I cursed my own pusillanimity. Thrice I plunged to the bottom, and as often rose again. My aversion to life swiftly diminished; and at length I consented to make use of my skill in swimming, which has seldom been

been exceeded, to prolong my exiſtence. I landed in a few minutes on the Jerſey ſhore.

"This ſcheme being fruſtrated, I ſunk into drearineſs and inactivity. I felt as if no dependance could be placed upon my courage—as if any effort I ſhould make for ſelf-deſtruction would be fruitleſs; yet exiſtence was as void as ever of enjoyment and embelliſhment. My means of living were annihilated. I ſaw no path before me. To ſhun the preſence of mankind was my ſovereign wiſh. Since I could not die by my own hands, I muſt be content to crawl upon the ſurface, till a ſuperior fate ſhould permit me to periſh.

"I wandered into the center of the wood. I ſtretched myſelf on the moſſy verge of a brook, and gazed at the ſtars till they diſappeared. The next day was ſpent with little variation. The cravings of hunger were felt, and the ſenſation was a joyous one, ſince it afforded me the practicable means of death. To refrain from food was eaſy, ſince

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ſome efforts would be needful to procure it, and theſe efforts ſhould not be made. Thus was the ſweet oblivion, for which I ſo earneſtly panted, placed within my reach.

" Three days of abſtinence, and reverie, and ſolitude ſucceeded. On the evening of the fourth, I was ſeated on a rock, with my face buried in my hands. Some one laid his hand upon my ſhoulder. I ſtarted and looked up. I beheld a face, beaming with compaſſion and benignity. He endeavoured to extort from me the cauſe of my ſolitude and ſorrow. I diſregarded his entreaties, and was obſtinately ſilent.

" Finding me invincible in this reſpect, he invited me to his College, which was hard-by. I repelled him, at firſt, with impatience and anger; but he was not to be diſcouraged or intimidated. To elude his perſuaſions I was obliged to comply. My ſtrength was gone, and the vital fabric was crumbling into pieces: a fever raged in my veins, and I was conſoled by reflecting that my

my life was at once assailed by famine and disease.

"Meanwhile, my gloomy meditations experienced no respite. I incessantly ruminated on the events of my past life. The long series of my crimes arose daily and afresh to my imagination. The image of Lodi was recalled, his expiring looks, and the directions which were mutually given respecting his sisters and his property.

"As I perpetually revolved these incidents, they assumed new forms, and were linked with new associations. The volume written by his father, and transferred to me by tokens which were now remembered to be more emphatic than the nature of the composition seemed to justify, was likewise remembered. It came attended by recollections respecting a volume which I filled, when a youth, with extracts from the Roman and Greek poets. Besides this literary purpose, I likewise used to preserve the bank-bills, with the keeping or carriage of which

I chanced

chanced to be entruſted. This image led me back to the leather caſe containing Lodi's property, which was put into my hands at the ſame time with the volume.

"Theſe images now gave birth to a third conception, which darted on my benighted underſtanding like an electrical flaſh. Was it poſſible that part of Lodi's property might be encloſed within the leaves of this volume? In haſtily turning it over, I recollected to have noticed leaves whoſe edges, by accident or deſign, adhered to each other.—Lodi, in ſpeaking of the ſale of his father's Weſt-Indian property, mentioned that the ſum obtained for it was forty thouſand dollars. Half only of this ſum had been diſcovered by me; how had the remainder been appropriated?—Surely this volume contained it.

"The influence of this thought was like the infuſion of a new ſoul into my frame. From torpid and deſperate—from inflexible averſion to medicine and food, I was changed in

in a moment into vivacity and hope—into ravenous avidity for whatever could contribute to my reſtoration to health.

" I was not without pungent regrets and racking fears. That this volume would be raviſhed away by creditors or plunderers, was poſſible. Every hour might be that which decided my fate. The firſt impulſe was to ſeek my dwelling, and ſearch for this precious depoſit.

" Meanwhile, my perturbations and impatience only exaſperated my diſeaſe. While chained to my bed, the rumour of peſtilence was ſpread abroad. This event, however generally calamitous, was propitious to me, and was hailed with ſatisfaction: it multiplied the chances that my houſe and its furniture would be unmoleſted.

" My friend was aſſiduous and indefatigable in his kindneſs. My deportment, before and ſubſequent to the revival of my hopes, was incomprehenſible, and argued nothing leſs than inſanity. My thoughts were

were carefully concealed from him, and all that he witneſſed was contradictory and unintelligible.

" At length my ſtrength was ſufficiently reſtored. I reſiſted all my protector's importunities to poſtpone my departure till the perfect confirmation of my health. I deſigned to enter the city at midnight, that prying eyes might be eluded; to carry with me a candle, and the means of lighting it, to explore my way to my ancient ſtudy, and to aſcertain my future claim to exiſtence and felicity.

" I croſſed the river this morning. My impatience would not ſuffer me to wait till evening. Conſidering the deſolation of the city, I thought I might venture to approach thus near, without hazard of detection. The houſe at all its avenues was cloſed. I ſtole into the back-court. A window-ſhutter proved to be unfaſtened. I entered, and diſcovered cloſets and cabinets unfaſtened, and emptied of all their contents. At this ſpectacle my heart ſunk. My books, doubtleſs, had

had ſhared the common deſtiny. My blood throbbed with painful vehemence as I approached the ſtudy, and opened the door.

"My hopes, that languiſhed for a moment, were revived by the ſight of my ſhelves furniſhed as formerly. I had lighted my candle below; for I deſired not to awaken obſervation and ſuſpicion by uncloſing the windows. My eye eagerly ſought the ſpot where I remembered to have left the volume. Its place was empty. The object of all my hopes had eluded my graſp, and diſappeared for ever.

"To paint my confuſion, to repeat my execrations on the infatuation which had rendered, during ſo long a time that it was in my poſſeſſion, this treaſure uſeleſs to me, and my curſes of the fatal interference which had ſnatched away this prize, would be only aggravations of my diſappointment and my ſorrow. You found me in this ſtate, and know what followed."

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

ARGUMENT.

THIS narrative threw new light on the character of Welbeck. If accident had given him poſſeſſion of this treaſure, it was eaſy to predict on what ſchemes of luxury and ſelfiſhneſs it would have been expended. The ſame dependance on the world's erroneous eſtimation—the ſame devotion to impoſture, and thoughtleſſneſs of futurity, would have conſtituted the picture of his future life, as had diſtinguiſhed the paſt.

This money was another's. To retain it for his own uſe was criminal. Of this crime he

he appeared to be as insensible as ever. His own gratification was the supreme law of his actions. To be subjected to the necessity of honest labour, was the heaviest of all evils, and one from which he was willing to escape by the commission of suicide.

The volume which he sought was mine. It was my duty to restore it to the rightful owner; or, if the legal claimant could not be found, to employ it in the promotion of virtue and happiness. To give it to Welbeck, was to consecrate it to the purpose of selfishness and misery. My right, legally considered, was as valid as his.

But if I intended not to resign it to him, was it proper to disclose the truth, and explain by whom the volume was purloined from the shelf?—The first impulse was to hide this truth: but my understanding had been taught, by recent occurrences, to question the justice, and deny the usefulness of secrecy in any case. My principles were true, my motives were pure. Why should

I ſcruple to avow my principles, and vindicate my actions?

Welbeck had ceaſed to be dreaded or revered. That awe which was once created by his ſuperiority of age, refinement of manners, and dignity of garb had vaniſhed. I was a boy in years, an indigent and uneducated ruſtic; but I was able to diſcern the illuſions of power and riches, and abjured every claim to eſteem that was not founded on integrity. There was no tribunal before which I ſhould falter in aſſerting the truth; and no ſpecies of martyrdom which I would not cheerfully embrace in its cauſe.

After ſome pauſe, I ſaid—"Cannot you conjecture in what way this volume has diſappeared?"

"No," he anſwered, with a ſigh.—Why, of all his volumes, this only ſhould have vaniſhed, was an inexplicable enigma.

"Perhaps," ſaid I, "it is leſs important to know how it was removed, than by whom it is now poſſeſſed.

"Unqueſtionably;—and yet, unleſs that knowledge enables me to regain the poſſeſſion, it will be uſeleſs."

"Uſeleſs then it will be; for the preſent poſſeſſor will never to return it to you."

"Indeed," replied he, in a tone of dejection, "your conjecture is moſt probable. Such a prize is of too much value to be given up."

"What I have ſaid, flows not from conjecture, but from knowledge.—I know that it will never be reſtored to you."

At theſe words Welbeck looked at me with anxiety and doubt.

"You *know* that it will not!—Have you any knowledge of the book?—Can you tell me what has become of it?"

"Yes.—After our ſeparation on the river, I returned to this houſe. I found this volume, and ſecured it. You rightly ſuſpected its contents—the money was there."

Welbeck ſtarted as if he had trodden on a mine of gold. His firſt emotion was rapturous, but was immediately chaſtiſed by ſome

ſome degree of doubt.—"What has become of it? Have you it? Is it entire? Have you it with you?"

"It is unimpaired. I have it, and ſhall hold it as a ſacred truſt for the rightful proprietor."

The tone with which this declaration was accompanied, ſhook the new-born confidence of Welbeck.—"The rightful proprietor! true, but I am he. To me only it belongs, and to me you are, doubtleſs, willing to reſtore it."

"Mr. Welbeck, it is not my deſire to give you perplexity or anguiſh—to ſport with your paſſions. On the ſuppoſition of your death, I deemed it no infraction of juſtice to take this manuſcript. Accident unfolded its contents. I could not heſitate to chuſe my path. The natural and legal ſucceſſor of Vincentio Lodi is his ſiſter. To her, therefore, this property belongs, and to her only will I give it."

"Preſumptuous boy! and this is your ſage deciſion. I tell you that I am the

owner, and to me you ſhall render it! Who is this girl!—childiſh and ignorant!—unable to conſult and to act for herſelf on the moſt trivial occaſion. Am I not, by the appointment of her dying brother, her protector and guardian? Her age produces a legal incapacity of property. Do you imagine that ſo obvious an expedient as that of procuring my legal appointment as her guardian, was overlooked by me? If it were neglected, ſtill my title to provide her ſubſiſtence and enjoyment is unqueſtionable.

"Did I not reſcue her from poverty, and proſtitution, and infamy? Have I not ſupplied all her wants with inceſſant ſolicitude? Whatever her condition required has been plenteouſly ſupplied. This dwelling and its furniture was her's, as far as a rigid juriſprudence would permit. To preſcribe her expences, and govern her family, was the province of her guardian.

"You have heard the tale of my anguiſh and deſpair. Whence did they flow but from the fruſtration of ſchemes projected for her benefit,

benefit, as they were executed with her money, and by means which the authority of her guardian fully juſtified. Why have I encountered this contagious atmoſphere, and explored my way, like a thief, to this receſs, but with a view to reſcue her from poverty, and reſtore to her her own?

"Your ſcruples are ridiculous and criminal. I treat them with leſs ſeverity, becauſe your youth is raw, and your conceptions crude. But if, after this proof of the juſtice of my claim, you heſitate to reſtore the money, I ſhall treat you as a robber, who has plundered my cabinet, and refuſed to refund his ſpoil."

Theſe reaſonings were powerful and new. I was acquainted with the rights of guardianſhip. Welbeck had, in ſome reſpects, acted as the friend of this lady. To veſt himſelf with this office was the conduct which her youth and helpleſſneſs preſcribed to her friend. His title to this money, as her guardian, could not be denied.

But how was this ſtatement compatible

with former repreſentations? No mention had then been made of guardianſhip. By thus acting, he would have thwarted all his ſchemes for winning the eſteem of mankind, and foſtering the belief which the world entertained of his opulence and independence.

I was thrown, by theſe thoughts, into conſiderable perplexity. If his ſtatement were true, his claim to this money was eſtabliſhed; but I queſtioned its truth. To intimate my doubts of his veracity, would be to provoke abhorrence and outrage.

His laſt inſinuation was peculiarly momentous. Suppoſe him the fraudulent poſſeſſor of this money, ſhall I be juſtified in taking it away by violence, under pretence of reſtoring it to the genuine proprietor, who, for aught I know, may be dead, or with whom, at leaſt, I may never procure a meeting? But will not my behaviour, on this occaſion, be deemed illicit? I entered Welbeck's habitation at midnight, proceeded to his cloſet, poſſeſſed myſelf of portable property, and retired unobſerved.

Is

Is not guilt imputable to an action like this?

Welbeck waited with impatience for a concluſion to my pauſe. My perplexity and indeciſion did not abate, and my ſilence continued. At length he repeated his demands with new vehemence. I was compelled to anſwer. I told him, in few words, that his reaſonings had not convinced me of the equity of his claim, and that my determination was unaltered.

He had not expected this inflexibility from one in my ſituation. The folly of oppoſition, when my feebleneſs and loneline ſs were contraſted with his activity and reſources, appeared to him monſtrous and glaring; but his contempt was converted into rage and fear when he reflected that this folly might finally defeat his hopes. He had probably determined to obtain the money, let the purchaſe coſt what it would, but was willing to exhauſt pacific expedients before he ſhould reſort to force. He might likewiſe queſtion whether the money was within

his reach :—I had told him that I had it, but whether it was now about me was somewhat dubious; yet, though he uſed no direct enquiries, he choſe to proceed on the ſuppoſition of its being at hand. His angry tones were now changed into thoſe of remonſtrance and perſuaſion.

" Your preſent behaviour, Mervyn, does not juſtify the expectation I had formed of you. You have been guilty of a baſe theft. To this you have added the deeper crime of ingratitude; but your infatuation and folly are, at leaſt, as glaring as your guilt. Do you think I can credit your aſſertion that you keep this money for another, when I recollect that ſix weeks have paſſed ſince you carried it off? Why have you not ſought the owner, and reſtored it to her? If your intentions had been honeſt, would you have ſuffered ſo long a time to elapſe without doing this? It is plain that you deſigned to keep it for your own uſe.

" But whether this were your purpoſe or not, you have no longer power to reſtore it,

it, or retain it. You ſay that you came hither to die: if ſo, what is to be the fate of the money? In your preſent ſituation you cannot gain acceſs to the lady:—ſome other muſt inherit this wealth. Next to *Signora Lodi*, whoſe right can be put in competition with mine? But if you will not give it to me on my own account, let it be given in truſt for her. Let me be the bearer of it to her own hands. I have already ſhewn you that my claim to it, as her guardian, is legal and incontrovertible; but this claim I wave. I will merely be the executor of your will. I will bind myſelf to comply with your directions by any oath, however ſolemn and tremendous, which you ſhall preſcribe."

As long as my own heart acquitted me, theſe imputations of diſhoneſty affected me but little. They excited no anger, becauſe they originated in ignorance, and were rendered plauſible to Welbeck by ſuch facts as were known to him. It was needleſs to confute the charge by elaborate and circumſtantial details.

It was true that my recovery was in the higheſt degree improbable, and that my death would put an end to my power over this money; but had I not determined to ſecure its uſeful application, in caſe of my death? This project was obſtructed by the preſence of Welbeck; but I hoped that his love of life would induce him to fly. He might wreſt this volume from me by violence, or he might wait till my death ſhould give him peaceable poſſeſſion. But theſe, though probable events, were not certain, and would by no means juſtify the voluntary ſurrender. His ſtrength, if employed for this end, could not be reſiſted; but then it would be a ſacrifice, not to choice, but neceſſity.

Promiſes were eaſily given, but were ſurely not to be confided in. Welbeck's own tale, in which it could not be imagined that he had aggravated his defects, atteſted the frailty of his virtue. To put into his hands a ſum like this, in expectation of his delivering it to another, when my death would cover

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the tranſaction with impenetrable ſecrecy, would be, indeed, a proof of that infatuation which he thought proper to impute to me.

Theſe thoughts influenced my reſolutions, but they were revolved in ſilence. To ſtate them verbally was uſeleſs; they would not juſtify my conduct in his eyes—they would only exaſperate diſpute, and impel him to thoſe acts of violence which I was deſirous of preventing. The ſooner this controverſy ſhould end, and my meaſure be freed from the obſtruction of his company, the better.

"Mr. Welbeck," ſaid I, "my regard for your ſafety compels me to wiſh that this interview ſhould terminate. At a different time I ſhould not be unwilling to diſcuſs this matter: now it will be fruitleſs. My conſcience points out to me too clearly the path I ſhould purſue, for me to miſtake it. As long as I have power over this money, I ſhall keep it for the uſe of the unfortunate lady, whom I have ſeen in this houſe. I ſhall exert myſelf to find her; but if that be

impoſſible, I ſhall appropriate it in a way in which you ſhall have no participation."

I will not repeat the conteſt that ſucceeded between my forbearance and his paſſions. I liſtened to the dictates of his rage and his avarice in ſilence. Aſtoniſhment at my inflexibility was blended with his anger. By turns he commented on the guilt and on the folly of my reſolutions. Sometimes his emotions would mount into fury, and he would approach me in a menacing attitude, and lift his hand as if he would exterminate me at a blow. My languid eyes, my cheeks glowing, my temples throbbing with fever, and my total paſſiveneſs, attracted his attention, and arreſted his ſtroke. Compaſſion would take place of rage, and the belief be revived that remonſtrances and arguments would anſwer his purpoſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE BANK-NOTES.

THIS ſcene laſted I know not how long. Inſenſibly the paſſions and reaſonings of Welbeck aſſumed a new form. A grief, mingled with perplexity, overſpread his countenance. He ceaſed to contend or to ſpeak. His regards were withdrawn from me, on whom they had hitherto been fixed; and wandering or vacant, teſtified a conflict of mind terrible beyond any that my young imagination had ever conceived.

For a time he appeared to be unconſcious of my preſence. He moved to and fro with

unequal ſteps, and with geſticulations that poſſeſſed a horrible but indiſtinct ſignificance. Occaſionally he ſtruggled for breath, and his efforts were directed to remove ſome choking impediment.

No teſt of my fortitude had hitherto occurred equal to that to which it was now ſubjected. The ſuſpicion which this deportment ſuggeſted was vague and formleſs. The tempeſt which I witneſſed was the prelude of horror. Theſe were throes which would terminate in the birth of ſome gigantic and ſanguinary purpoſe. Did he meditate to offer a bloody ſacrifice? Was his own death or was mine to atteſt the magnitude of his deſpair, or the impetuoſity of his vengeance?

Suicide was familiar to his thoughts. He had conſented to live but on one condition—that of regaining poſſeſſion of this money. Should I be juſtified in driving him, by my obſtinate refuſal, to this fatal conſummation of his crimes? Yet my fear of this cataſtrophe was groundleſs. Hitherto he had argued

argued and perſuaded; but this method was purſued becauſe it was more eligible than the employment of force, or than procraſtination.

No; theſe were tokens that pointed to me. Some unknown inſtigation was at work within him, to tear away his remnant of humanity, and fit him for the office of my murderer. I knew not how the accumulation of guilt could contribute to his gratification or ſecurity. His actions had been partially exhibited, and vaguely ſeen. What extenuations or omiſſions had vitiated his former or recent narrative—how far his actual performances were congenial with the deed which was now to be perpetrated, I knew not.

Theſe thoughts lent new rapidity to my blood. I raiſed my head from the pillow, and watched the deportment of this man with deeper attention. The paroxyſm which controuled him at length in ſome degree ſubſided. He muttered—"Yes; it muſt come—my laſt humiliation muſt cover me—my

my laſt confeſſion muſt be made! To die, and leave behind me this train of enormous perils muſt not be!

"Oh Clemenza! Oh Mervyn! ye have not merited that I ſhould leave you a legacy of perſecution and death. Your ſafety muſt be purchaſed at whatever price my malignant deſtiny will ſet upon it. The cord of the executioner, the note of everlaſting infamy, is better than to leave you beſet by the conſequences of my guilt. It muſt not be!"

Saying this, Welbeck caſt fearful glances at the windows and door. He examined every avenue, and liſtened. Thrice he repeated this ſcrutiny. Having, as it ſeemed, aſcertained that no one lurked within audience, he approached the bed. He put his mouth cloſe to my face. He attempted to ſpeak, but once more examined the apartment with ſuſpicious glances.

He drew cloſer, and at length, in a tone ſcarcely articulate, and ſuffocated with emotion, he ſpoke—"Excellent but fatally obſtinate youth! know at leaſt the cauſe of

of my importunity—know at leaſt the depth of my infatuation and the enormity of my guilt!

"The bills—ſurrender them to me, and ſave yourſelf from perſecution and diſgrace. Save the woman, whom you wiſh to benefit, from the blackeſt imputations—from hazard to her life and her fame—from languiſhing in dungeons—from expiring on the gallows!——

"The bills—Oh ſave me from the bitterneſs of death!—Let the evils, to which my miſerable life has given birth, terminate here and in myſelf!—Surrender them to me, for——"

There he ſtopped. His utterance was choked by terror. Rapid glances were again darted at the windows and door. The ſilence was uninterrupted except by diſtant ſounds, produced by ſome moving carriage. Once more he ſummoned reſolution, and ſpoke—

"Surrender them to me, for—*they are forged!*

"Formerly

" Formerly I told you that a ſcheme of forgery had been conceived. Shame would not ſuffer me to add that my ſcheme was carried into execution. The bills were faſhioned, but my fears contended againſt my neceſſities, and forbade me to attempt to exchange them. The interview with Lodi ſaved me from the dangerous experiment. I encloſed them in that volume, as the means of future opulence, to be uſed when all other and leſs hazardous reſources ſhould fail.

" In the agonies of my remorſe at the death of Watſon, they were forgotten ;— they afterwards recurred to recollection.— My wiſhes pointed to the grave ; but the ſtroke that ſhould deliver me from life was ſuſpended only till I could haſten hither, get poſſeſſion of theſe papers, and deſtroy them.

" When I thought upon the chances that ſhould give them an owner, bring them into circulation, load the innocent with ſuſpicion, and lead them trial, and perhaps to death, my ſenſations were fraught with agony ; earneſtly as I panted for death, it was neceſ-

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tarily deferred till I had gained poſſeſſion of, and deſtroyed theſe papers.

"What now remains?—You have found them. Happily they have not been uſed. Give them, therefore, to me, that I may cruſh at once the brood of miſchiefs which they could not but generate."

This diſcloſure was ſtrange. It was accompanied with every token of ſincerity. How had I tottered on the brink of deſtruction!—If I had made uſe of this money, in what a labyrinth of miſery might I not have been involved!—My innocence could never have been proved. An alliance with Welbeck could not have failed to be inferred. My career would have found an ignominious cloſe; or, if my puniſhment had been tranſmuted into ſlavery and toil, would the teſtimony of my conſcience have ſupported me?

I ſhuddered at the view of thoſe diſaſters, from which I was reſcued by the miraculous chance which led me to this houſe. Welbeck's requeſt was ſalutary to me, and honourable

honourable to himſelf. I could not heſitate a moment in compliance. The notes were encloſed in paper, and depoſited in a fold of my clothes. I put my hand upon them.

My motion and attention were arreſted at the inſtant by a noiſe which aroſe in the ſtreet: footſteps were heard upon the pavement before the door, and voices, as if buſy in diſcourſe. This incident was adapted to infuſe the deepeſt alarm into myſelf and my companion. The motives of our trepidation were indeed different, and were infinitely more powerful in my caſe than in his: it portended to me nothing leſs than the loſs of my aſylum, and condemnation to a hoſpital.

Welbeck hurried to the door, to liſten to the converſation below. This interval was pregnant with thought. That impulſe which led my reflections from Welbeck to my own ſtate, paſſed away in a moment, and ſuffered me to meditate anew upon the terms of that confeſſion which had juſt been made.

Horror

Horror at the fate which this interview had enabled me to ſhun, was uppermoſt in my conception. I was eager to ſurrender theſe fatal bills. I held them for that purpoſe in my hand, and was impatient for Welbeck's return. He continued at the door, ſtooping, with his face averted, and eagerly attentive to the converſation in the ſtreet.

All the circumſtances of my preſent ſituation tended to arreſt the progreſs of thought, and chain my contemplations to one image; but even now there was room for foreſight and deliberation. Welbeck intended to deſtroy theſe bills. Perhaps he had not been ſincere; or, if his purpoſe had been honeſtly diſcloſed, this purpoſe might change when the bills were in his poſſeſſion. His poverty and ſanguineneſs of temper might prompt him to uſe them.

That this conduct was evil, and would only multiply his miſeries, could not be queſtioned. Why ſhould I ſubject his frailty to this temptation?—The deſtruction of theſe bills

bills was the loudeſt injunction of my duty—was demanded by every ſanction which bound me to promote the welfare of mankind.

The means of deſtruction were eaſy: a lighted candle ſtood on a table, at the diſtance of a few yards. Why ſhould I heſitate a moment to annihilate ſo powerful a cauſe of error and guilt? A paſſing inſtant was ſufficient. A momentary lingering might change the circumſtances that ſurrounded me, and fruſtrate my project.

My languors were ſuſpended by the urgencies of this occaſion. I ſtarted from my bed, and glided to the table. Seizing the notes with my right hand, I held them in the flame of the candle, and then threw them blazing on the floor.

The ſudden illumination was perceived by Welbeck. The cauſe of it appeared to ſuggeſt itſelf as ſoon. He turned, and marking the paper where it lay, leaped to the ſpot and extinguiſhed the fire with his foot. His interpoſition was too late: only enough of them

them remained to inform him of the nature of the ſacrifice.

Welbeck now ſtood with limbs trembling, features aghaſt, and eyes glaring upon me. For a time he was without ſpeech. The ſtorm was gathering in ſilence, and at length burſt upon me. In a tone menacing and loud, he exclaimed—

"Wretch! what have you done?"

"I have done juſtly. Theſe notes were falſe. You was deſirous of deſtroying them, that they might not betray the innocent. I applauded your purpoſe, and have ſaved you from the danger of temptation by deſtroying them myſelf."

"Maniac!—miſcreant!—to be fooled by ſo groſs an artifice!—The notes were genuine! The tale of their forgery was falſe, and meant only to wreſt them from you!—Execrable and perverſe idiot! your deed has ſealed my perdition;—it has ſealed your own. You ſhall pay for it with your blood! I will flay you by inches! I will ſtretch you as you have ſtretched me—on the rack!"

During

During this ſpeech, all was frenzy and ſtorm in the countenance and features of Welbeck. Nothing leſs could be expected than that the ſcene would terminate in ſome bloody cataſtrophe. I bitterly regretted the facility with which I had been deceived, and the precipitation of my ſacrifice. The act, however lamentable, could not be revoked. What remained, but to encounter or endure its conſequences with unſhrinking firmneſs?

The conteſt was too unequal. It is poſſible that the frenzy which actuated Welbeck might have ſpeedily ſubſided. It is more likely that his paſſions would have been ſatiated with nothing but my death. This event was precluded by loud knocks at the ſtreet-door, and calls by ſome one on the pavement without, of—"Who is within?—"Is any one within?"

Theſe noiſes gave a new direction to Welbeck's thoughts.—"They are coming," ſaid he: "they will treat you as a ſick man and a thief. I cannot deſire you to ſuffer a worſe evil than they will inflict. I leave you

to

to your fate."—So ſaying, he ruſhed out of the room.

Though confounded and ſtunned by this rapid ſucceſſion of events, I was yet able to purſue meaſures for eluding theſe deteſted viſitants. I firſt extinguiſhed the light, and then obſerving that the parley in the ſtreet continued, and grew louder, I ſought an aſylum in the remoteſt corner of the houſe. During my former abode here, I noticed that a trap-door opened in the ceiling of the third ſtory, to which you were conducted by a moveable ladder. I conſidered that this probably was an opening into a narrow and darkſome nook, formed by the angle of the roof. By aſcending, drawing after me the ladder, and cloſing the door, I ſhould eſcape the moſt vigilant ſearch.

Enfeebled as I was by my diſeaſe, my reſolution rendered me ſtrenuous. I gained the uppermoſt room, and mounting the ladder, found myſelf at a ſufficient diſtance from ſuſpicion. The ladder was haſtily drawn up, and the door cloſed. In a few minutes,

however, my new retreat proved to be worſe than any for which it was poſſible to change it. The air was muſty, ſtagnant, and ſcorchingly hot. My breathing became difficult, and I ſaw that to remain here ten minutes, would unavoidably produce ſuffocation.

My terror of intruders had rendered me blind to the conſequences of immuring myſelf in this cheerleſs receſs. It was incumbent on me to extricate myſelf as ſpeedily as poſſible. I attempted to lift the door. My firſt effort was ſucceſſleſs. Every reſpiration was quicker, and more difficult than the former. As my terror, ſo my ſtrength and my exertions increaſed. Finally, my trembling hand lighted on a nail that was imperfectly driven into the wood, and which, by affording me a firmer hold, enabled me at length to raiſe it, and to inhale the air from beneath.

Relieved from my new peril by this ſituation, I bent an attentive ear through the opening, with a view to aſcertain if the houſe had been entered, or if the outer door was

ſtill

ſtill beſet; but could hear nothing. Hence I was authorized to conclude that the people had departed, and that I might reſume my former ſtation without hazard.

Before I deſcended, however, I caſt a curious eye over this receſs:—it was large enough to accommodate a human being; the means by which it was entered were eaſily concealed; though narrow and low, it was long, and, were it poſſible to contrive ſome inlet for the air, one deſirous of concealment might rely on its protection with unbounded confidence.

My ſcrutiny was imperfect, by reaſon of the faint light which found its way through the opening; yet it was ſufficient to ſet me afloat on a ſea of new wonders, and ſubject my fortitude to a new teſt.——

Here Mervyn pauſed in his narrative. A minute paſſed in ſilence and ſeeming indeciſion. His perplexities gradually diſappeared, and he continued.

I have promiſed to relate the momentous incidents of my life, and have hitherto been

faithful in my enumeration. There is nothing which I more deteſt than equivocation and myſtery. Perhaps, however, I ſhall now incur ſome imputation of that kind. I would willingly eſcape the accuſation, but confeſs that I am hopeleſs of eſcaping it.

I might indeed have precluded your gueſſes and ſurmiſes, by omitting to relate what befel me from the time of my leaving my chamber till I regained it. I might deceive you by aſſerting that nothing remarkable occurred; but this would be falſe, and every ſacrifice is trivial, which is made upon the altar of ſincerity. Beſides, the time may come when no inconvenience will ariſe from minute deſcriptions of the objects which I now ſaw, and of the reaſonings and inferences which they ſuggeſted to my underſtanding. At preſent, it appears to be my duty to paſs them over in ſilence; but it would be needleſs to conceal from you that the interval, though ſhort, and the ſcrutiny, though haſty, furniſhed matter which my curioſity devoured with unſpeak-

able

able eagerneſs, and from which conſequences may hereafter flow, deciding on my peace and my life.

Nothing, however, occurred which could detain me long in this ſpot. I once more ſought the lower ſtory, and threw myſelf on the bed which I had left. My mind was thronged with the images flowing from my late adventures. My fever had gradually increaſed, and my thoughts were deformed by inaccuracy and confuſion.

My heart did not ſink when I reverted to my own condition. That I ſhould quickly be diſabled from moving, was readily perceived: the foreſight of my deſtiny was ſtedfaſt and clear. To linger for days in this comfortleſs ſolitude—to aſk in vain, not for powerful reſtoratives or alleviating cordials, but for water to moiſten my burning lips, and abate the torments of thirſt—ultimately, to expire in torpor or frenzy, was the fate to which I looked forward; yet I was not terrified. I ſeemed to be ſuſtained by a preternatural energy. I felt as if the oppor-

tunity of combating ſuch evils was an enviable privilege; and though none would witneſs my victorious magnanimity, yet to be conſcious that praiſe was my due, was all that my ambition required.

Theſe ſentiments were doubtleſs tokens of delirium. The excruciating agonies which now ſeized upon my head, and the cord which ſeemed to be drawn acroſs my breaſt, and which, as my fancy imagined, was tightened by ſome forcible hand, with a view to ſtrangle me, were incompatible with ſober and coherent views.

Thirſt was the evil which chiefly oppreſſed me. The means of relief were pointed out by nature and habit. I roſe, and determined to repleniſh my pitcher at the well. It was eaſier, however, to deſcend than to return. My limbs refuſed to bear me, and I ſat down upon the lower ſtep of the ſtaircaſe. Several hours had elapſed ſince my entrance into this dwelling, and it was now night.

My imagination now ſuggeſted a new expedient. Medlicote was a generous and

fearleſs

fearleſs ſpirit; to put myſelf under his protection, if I could walk as far as his lodgings, was the wiſeſt proceeding which I could adopt. From this deſign my incapacity to walk thus far, and the conſequences of being diſcovered in the ſtreet, had hitherto deterred me. Theſe impediments were now, in the confuſion of my underſtanding, overlooked or deſpiſed; and I forthwith ſet out upon this hopeleſs expedition.

The doors communicating with the court, and through the court with the ſtreet, were faſtened by inſide bolts; theſe were eaſily withdrawn, and I iſſued forth with alacrity and confidence. My perturbed ſenſes and the darkneſs hindered me from diſcerning the right way. I was conſcious of this difficulty, but was not diſheartened. I proceeded, as I have ſince diſcovered, in a direction different from the true one; but heſitated not, till my powers were exhauſted, and I ſunk upon the ground. I cloſed my eyes, and diſmiſſed all fear, and all foreſight of futurity. In this ſituation I remained ſome hours, and

ſhould probably have expired on this ſpot, had not I attracted your notice, and been provided under this roof with all that medical ſkill and the tendereſt humanity could ſuggeſt.

In conſequence of your care, I have been reſtored to life and to health. Your conduct was not influenced by the proſpect of pecuniary recompence, of ſervice, or of gratitude. It is only in one way that I am able to heighten the gratification which muſt flow from reflection on your conduct—by ſhewing that the being whoſe life you have prolonged, though uneducated, ignorant, and poor, is not profligate and worthleſs, and will not dedicate that life which your bounty has given, to miſchievous or contemptible purpoſes.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

A PROPOSAL.

HERE ended the narrative of Mervyn. Surely its incidents were of no common kind. During this ſeaſon of peſtilence my opportunities of obſervation had been numerous, and I had not ſuffered them to paſs unimproved. The occurrences which fell within my own experience bore a general reſemblance to thoſe which had juſt been related; but they did not hinder the latter from ſtriking on my mind with all the force of novelty. They ſerved no end, but as vouchers for the truth of the tale.

Surely the youth had displayed inimitable and heroic qualities. His courage was the growth of benevolence and reason, and not the child of insensibility, and the nursling of habit. He had been qualified for the encounter of gigantic dangers by no laborious education. He stepped forth upon the stage, unfurnished, by anticipation or experience, with the means of security against fraud; and yet, by the aid of pure intentions, had frustrated the wiles of an accomplished and veteran deceiver.

I blessed the chance which placed the youth under my protection. When I reflected on that tissue of nice contingencies which led him to my door, and enabled me to save from death a being of such rare endowments, my heart overflowed with joy, not unmingled with regret and trepidation. How many have been cut off by this disease in their career of virtue, and their blossom-time of genius! How many deeds of heroism and self-devotion are ravished from existence, and consigned to hopeless oblivion!

I had

I had ſaved the life of this youth. This was not the limit of my duty or my power. Could I not render that life profitable to himſelf and to mankind? The gains of my profeſſion were ſlender; but theſe gains were ſufficient for his maintenance as well as my own. By reſiding with me, partaking my inſtructions, and reading my books, he would, in a few years, be fitted for the practice of phyſic. A ſcience, whoſe truths are ſo conducive to the welfare of mankind, and which comprehends the whole ſyſtem of nature, could not but gratify a mind ſo beneficent and ſtrenuous as his.

This ſcheme occurred to me as ſoon as the concluſion of his tale allowed me to think. I did not immediately mention it; ſince the approbation of my wife, of whoſe concurrence, however, I entertained no doubt, was previouſly to be obtained. Diſmiſſing it, for the preſent, from my thoughts, I reverted to the incidents of his tale.

The lady whom Welbeck had betrayed and deſerted, was not unknown to me. I

was but too well acquainted with her fate. If ſhe had been ſingle in calamity, her tale would have been liſtened to with inſupportable ſympathy; but the frequency of the ſpectacle of diſtreſs ſeems to leſſen the compaſſion with which it is reviewed. Now that thoſe ſcenes are only remembered, my anguiſh is greater than when they were witneſſed. Then every new day was only a repetition of the diſaſters of the foregoing. My ſenſibility, if not extinguiſhed, was blunted; and I gazed upon the complicated ills of poverty and ſickneſs with a degree of unconcern, on which I ſhould once have reflected with aſtoniſhment.

The fate of Clemenza Lodi was not, perhaps, more ſignal than many which have occurred. It threw a deteſtable light upon the character of Welbeck, and ſhewed him to be more inhuman than the tale of Mervyn had evinced him to be. That man, indeed, was hitherto imperfectly ſeen. The time had not come which ſhould fully unfold the enormity

enormity of his tranſgreſſions and the complexity of his frauds.

There lived in a remote quarter of the city a woman, by name Villars, who paſſed for the widow of an Engliſh officer. Her manners and mode of living were ſpecious. She had three daughters, well trained in the ſchool of faſhion, and elegant in perſon, manners, and dreſs. They had lately arrived from Europe, and for a time received from their neighbours that reſpect to which their education and fortune appeared to lay claim.

The fallacy of their pretenſions ſlowly appeared. It began to be ſuſpected that their ſubſiſtence was derived not from penſion or patrimony, but from the wages of pollution. Their habitation was clandeſtinely frequented by men who were unfaithful to their ſecret; one of theſe was allied to me by ties, which authorized me in watching his ſteps, and detecting his errors, with a view to his reformation. From him I obtained a know-

ledge of the genuine character of these women.

A man like Welbeck, who was the slave of depraved appetites, could not fail of being quickly satiated with innocence and beauty. Some accident introduced him to the knowledge of this family, and the youngest daughter found him a proper subject on which to exercise her artifices. It was to the frequent demands made upon his purse by this woman, that part of the embarrassments in which Mervyn found him involved, are to be ascribed.

To this circumstance must likewise be imputed his anxiety to transfer to some other the possession of the unhappy stranger. Why he concealed from Mervyn his connection with Lucy Villars, may be easily imagined. His silence, with regard to Clemenza's asylum, will not create surprise, when it is told that she was placed with Mrs. Villars. On what conditions she was received under this roof, cannot be so readily con-

conjectured. It is obvious, however, to ſuppoſe that advantage was to be taken of her ignorance and weakneſs, and that they hoped, in time, to make her an aſſociate in their profligate ſchemes.

The appearance of peſtilence, meanwhile, threw them into panic, and they haſtened to remove from danger. Mrs. Villars appears to have been a woman of no ordinary views. She ſtooped to the vileſt means of amaſſing money; but this money was employed to ſecure to herſelf and her daughters the benefits of independence. She purchaſed the houſe which ſhe occupied in the city, and a manſion in the environs, well built and ſplendidly furniſhed. To the latter ſhe and her family, of which the Italian girl was now a member, retired at the cloſe of July.

I have mentioned that the ſource of my intelligence was a kinſman, who had been drawn from the paths of ſobriety and rectitude by the impetuoſity of youthful paſſions. He had power to confeſs and deplore, but none

none to repair his errors. One of these women held him by a spell which he struggled in vain to dissolve, and by which, in spite of resolutions and remorses, he was drawn to her feet, and made to sacrifice to her pleasure his reputation and his fortune.

My house was his customary abode during those intervals in which he was persuaded to pursue his profession. Some time before the infection began its progress, he had disappeared. No tidings was received of him till a messenger arrived, entreating my assistance. I was conducted to the house of Mrs. Villars, in which I found no one but my kinsman. Here it seems he had immured himself from my enquiries, and on being seized by the reigning malady, had been deserted by the family, who, ere they departed, informed me by a messenger of his condition.

Despondency combined with his disease to destroy him. Before he died, he informed me fully of the character of his betrayers. The late arrival, name, and personal condition

t on of Clemenza Lodi were related. Welbeck was not named, but was described in terms which, combined with the narrative of Mervyn, enabled me to recognise the paramour of Lucy Villars in the man whose crimes had been the principal theme of our discourse.

Mervyn's curiosity was greatly roused when I intimated my acquaintance with the fate of Clemenza. In answer to his eager interrogations, I related what I knew. The tale plunged him into reverie. Recovering at length from his thoughtfulness, he spoke.

"Her condition is perilous. The poverty of Welbeck will drive him far from her abode. Her profligate protectors will entice her or abandon her to ruin. Cannot she be saved?"

"I know not," answered I, "by what means."

"The means are obvious. Let her remove to some other dwelling. Let her be apprized of the vices of those who surround her. Let her be entreated to fly. The will

will need only be inſpired, the danger need only be ſhewn, and ſhe is ſafe; for ſhe will remove beyond its reach."

"Thou art an adventurous youth. Who wilt thou find to undertake the office? Who will be perſuaded to enter the houſe of a ſtranger, ſeek without an introduction the preſence of this girl, tell her that the houſe ſhe inhabits is a houſe of proſtitution, prevail on her to believe the tale, and perſuade her to accompany him? Who will open his houſe to the fugitive? Whom will you convince that her illicit intercourſe with Welbeck, of which the opprobrious tokens cannot be concealed, has not fitted her for the company of proſtitutes, and made her unworthy of protection? Who will adopt into their family a ſtranger, whoſe conduct has incurred infamy, and whoſe preſent aſſociates have, no doubt, made her worthy of the curſe?"

"True; theſe are difficulties which I did not foreſee. Muſt ſhe then periſh? Shall not

not ſomething be done to reſcue her from infamy and guilt?"

"It is neither in your power nor in mine to do any thing."

The lateneſs of the hour put an end to our converſation, and ſummoned us to repoſe. I ſeized the firſt opportunity of imparting to my wife the ſcheme which had occurred relative to our gueſt, with which, as I expected, ſhe readily concurred. In the morning I mentioned it to Mervyn. I dwelt upon the benefits that adhered to the medical profeſſion—the power which it confers of lightening the diſtreſſes of our neighbours—the dignity which popular opinion annexes to it—the avenue which it opens to the acquiſition of competence—the freedom from ſervile cares which attends it—and the means of intellectual gratification with which it ſupplies us.

As I ſpoke, his eyes ſparkled with joy.—"Yes," ſaid he with vehemence, "I willingly embrace your offer. I accept this benefit, becauſe I know that if my pride ſhould

ſhould refuſe it, I ſhould prove myſelf leſs worthy than you think, and give you pain, inſtead of that pleaſure which I am bound to confer. I would enter on the duties and ſtudies of my new profeſſion immediately; but ſomewhat is due to Mr. Hadwin and his daughters. I cannot vanquiſh my inquietudes reſpecting them, but by returning to Malverton, and aſcertaining their ſtate with my own eyes. You know in what circumſtances I parted with Wallace and Mr. Hadwin. I am not ſure that either of them ever reached home, or that they did not carry the infection along with them. I now find myſelf ſufficiently ſtrong to perform the journey, and propoſed to have acquainted you, at this interview, with my intentions. An hour's delay is ſuperfluous, and I hope you will conſent to my ſetting out immediately. Rural exercife and air, for a week or fortnight, will greatly contribute to my health."

No objection could be made to this ſcheme. His narrative had excited no common

common affection in our bosoms for the Hadwins. His visit would not only inform us of their true state, but would dispel that anxiety which they could not but entertain respecting our guest. It was a topic of some surprise that neither Wallace nor Hadwin had returned to the city, with a view to obtain some tidings of their friend. It was easier to suppose them to have been detained by some misfortune, than by insensibility or indolence. In a few minutes Mervyn bade us adieu, and set out upon his journey, promising to acquaint us with the state of affairs as soon as possible after his arrival. We parted from him with reluctance, and found no consolation but in the prospect of his speedy return.

During his absence conversation naturally turned upon those topics which were suggested by the narrative and deportment of this youth. Different conclusions were formed by his two auditors. They had both contracted a deep interest in his welfare, and an ardent curiosity as to those particulars which

which his unfinished story had left in obscurity. The true character and actual condition of Welbeck were themes of much speculation. Whether he were dead or alive, near or distant from his ancient abode, was a point on which neither Mervyn nor any of those with whom I had means of intercourse afforded any information. Whether he had shared the common fate, and had been carried by the collectors of the dead from the highway or the hovel to the pits opened alike for the rich and the poor, the known and the unknown—whether he had escaped to a foreign shore, or were destined to reappear upon this stage, were questions involved in uncertainty.

The disappearance of Watson would, at a different time, have excited much enquiry and suspicion; but as this had taken place on the eve of the epidemic, his kindred and friends would acquiesce, without scruple, in the belief that he had been involved in the general calamity, and was to be numbered among the earliest victims. Those of his

profession

profeſſion uſually reſided in the ſtreet where the infection began, and where its ravages had been moſt deſtructive; and this circumſtance would corroborate the concluſions of his friends.

I did not perceive any immediate advantage to flow from imparting the knowledge I had lately gained to others. Shortly after Mervyn's departure to Malverton, I was viſited by Wortley. Enquiring for my gueſt, I told him that, having recovered his health, he had left my houſe. He repeated his invectives againſt the villany of Welbeck, his ſuſpicions of Mervyn, and his wiſhes for another interview with the youth. Why had I ſuffered him to depart, and whither had he gone?

"He has gone for a ſhort time into the country. I expect him to return in leſs than a week, when you will meet with him here as often as you pleaſe, for I expect him to take up his abode in this houſe."

Much aſtoniſhment and diſapprobation were expreſſed by my friend. I hinted that

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the lad had made diſclofures to me which juſtified my confidence in his integrity. Theſe proofs of his honeſty were not of a nature to be indiſcriminately unfolded. Mervyn had authorized me to communicate ſo much of his ſtory to Wortley, as would ſerve to vindicate him from the charge of being Welbeck's copartner in fraud; but this end would only be counteracted by an imperfect tale: and the full recital, though it might exculpate Mervyn, might produce inconveniences, by which this advantage would be outweighed.

Wortley, as might be naturally expected, was by no means ſatisfied with this ſtatement. He ſuſpected that Mervyn was a wily impoſtor; that he had been trained in the arts of fraud, under an accompliſhed teacher; that the tale which he had told to me was a tiſſue of ingenious and plauſible lies; that the mere aſſertions, however plauſible and ſolemn, of one like him, whoſe conduct had incurred ſuch ſtrong ſuſpicions, were unworthy of the leaſt credit.

"It

"It cannot be denied," continued my friend, "that he lived with Welbeck at the time of his elopement; that they disappeared together; that they entered a boat at Pine-street Wharf at midnight; that this boat was discovered by the owner in the possession of a fisherman at Red-bank, who affirmed that he had found it stranded near his door the day succeeding that on which they disappeared. Of all this I can supply you with incontestable proof. If, after this proof, you can give credit to his story, I shall think you made of very perverse and credulous materials."

"The proof you mention," said I, "will only enhance his credibility. All the facts which you have stated have been admitted by him. They constitute an essential portion of his narrative."

"What then is the inference? Are not these evidences of a compact between them? Has he not acknowledged this compact in confessing that he knew Welbeck was my debtor; that he was apprized of his flight,

but that, (what matchleſs effrontery!) he had promiſed ſecrecy, and would by no means betray him? You ſay he means to return; but of that I doubt. You will never ſee his face more. He is too wiſe to thruſt himſelf again into the nooſe: but I do not utterly deſpair of lighting upon Welbeck. Old Thetford, Jamieſon, and I have ſworn to hunt him through the world. I have ſtrong hopes that he has not ſtrayed far. Some intelligence has lately been received, which has enabled us to place our hounds upon the ſcent. He may double and ſkulk; but if he does not fall into our toils at laſt, he will have the agility and cunning, as well as the malignity of devils."

The vengeful diſpoſition thus betrayed by Wortley was not without excuſe. The vigour of his days had been ſpent in acquiring a ſlender capital: his diligence and honeſty had ſucceeded, and he had lately thought his ſituation ſuch as to juſtify marriage with an excellent woman, to whom he had for years been betrothed, but from whom

whom his poverty had hitherto compelled him to live ſeparate. Scarcely had this alliance taken place, and the full career of nuptial enjoyments begun, when his ill fate expoſed him to the frauds of Welbeck, and brought him, in one evil hour, to the brink of inſolvency.

Jamieſon and Thetford, however, were rich, and I had not till now been informed that they had reaſons for purſuing Welbeck with peculiar animoſity. The latter was the uncle of him whoſe fate had been related by Mervyn, and was one of thoſe who employed money, not as the medium of traffic, but as in itſelf a commodity. He had neither wines nor cloths to tranſmute into ſilver. He thought it a tedious proceſs to exchange to-day one hundred dollars for a caſk or bale, and to-morrow exchange the bale or caſk for a hundred *and ten* dollars. It was better to give the hundred for a piece of paper, which, carried forthwith to the money changers, he could procure a hundred, twenty-three, and three-fourths. In ſhort, this man's coffers

were ſupplied by the deſpair of honeſt men, and the ſtratagems of rogues. I did not immediately ſuſpect how this man's prudence and indefatigable attention to his own intereſt ſhould allow him to become the dupe of Welbeck.

"What," ſaid I, "is old Thetford's claim upon Welbeck?"

"It is a claim," he replied, "that if it ever be made good, will doom Welbeck to impriſonment and wholeſome labour for life."

"How? Surely it is nothing more than debt."

"Have you not heard? But that is no wonder: happily you are a ſtranger to mercantile anxieties and revolutions. Your fortune does not reſt on a baſis which an untoward blaſt may ſweep away, or four ſtrokes of a pen may demoliſh. That hoary dealer in ſuſpicions was perſuaded to put his hand to three notes for eight hundred dollars each. The *eight* was then dexterouſly prolonged to eigh*teen*; they were duly depoſited

in

in time and place, and the next day Welbeck was credited for fifty-three hundred and seventy-three, which an hour after were *told out* to his meſſenger. It is hard to ſay whether the old man's grief, ſhame, or rage be uppermoſt. He diſdains all comfort but revenge, and that he will procure at any price. Jamieſon, who deals in the ſame *ſtuff* with Thetford, was outwitted in the ſame manner, to the ſame amount, and on the ſame day.

"This Welbeck muſt have powers above the common rate of mortals. Grown grey in ſtudying the follies and the ſtratagems of men, theſe veterans were overreached. No one pities them. 'Twere well if his artifices had been limited to ſuch, and he had ſpared the honeſt and the poor. It is for his injuries to men who have earned their ſcanty ſubſiſtence without forfeiting their probity, that I hate him, and ſhall exult to ſee him ſuffer all the rigours of the law."

Here Wortley's engagements compelled him to take his leave.

CHAP. IX.

STRANGE REPORT.

WHILE muſing upon theſe facts, I could not but reflect with aſtoniſhment on the narrow eſcapes which Mervyn's virtue had experienced. I was by no means certain that his fame or his life was exempt from all danger; or that the ſuſpicions, which had already been formed reſpecting him, could poſſibly be wiped away. Nothing but his own narrative, repeated with that ſimple but nervous eloquence, which we had witneſſed, could reſcue him from the moſt heinous charges. Was there any tribunal that

that would not acquit him, on merely hearing his defence?

Surely the youth was honeſt. His tale could not be the fruit of invention; and yet what are the bounds of fraud?—Nature has ſet no limits to the combinations of fancy. A ſmooth exterior, a ſhew of virtue, and a ſpecious tale, are a thouſand times exhibited in human intercourſe by craft and ſubtilty. Motives are endleſſly varied, while actions continue the ſame; and an acute penetration may not find it hard to ſelect and arrange motives, ſuited to exempt from cenſure any action that a human being can commit.

Had I heard Mervyn's ſtory from another, or read it in a book, I might perhaps have found it poſſible to ſuſpect the truth; but as long as the impreſſion made by his tones, geſtures, and looks remained in my memory, this ſuſpicion was impoſſible. Wickedneſs may ſometimes be ambiguous—its maſk may puzzle the obſerver, our judgment may be made to falter and fluctuate;

but the face of Mervyn is the index of a honeſt mind. Calm or vehement, doubting or confident, it is full of benevolence and candour. He that liſtens to his words may queſtion their truth; but he that looks upon his countenance when ſpeaking, cannot withhold his faith.

It was poſſible, however, to find evidence, ſupporting or confuting his ſtory. I chanced to be acquainted with a family, by name Althorpe, who were natives of that part of the country where his father reſided. I paid them a viſit; and, after a few preliminaries, mentioned, as if by accident, the name of Mervyn. They immediately recogniſed this name as belonging to one of their ancient neighbours. The death of the wife and ſons, and the ſeduction of the only daughter by Colvil, with many pathetic incidents connected with the fate of this daughter, were mentioned.

This intelligence induced me to enquire of Mrs. Althorpe, a ſenſible and candid woman,

woman, if ſhe were acquainted with the recent, or preſent ſituation of this family.

"I cannot ſay much," ſhe anſwered, "of my own knowledge. Since my marriage, I am uſed to ſpend a few weeks in the ſummer at my father's; but am leſs inquiſitive than I once was into the concerns of my old neighbours. I recollect, however, when there laſt year, during the fever, to have heard that Sawny Mervyn had taken a ſecond wife; that his only ſon, a youth of eighteen, had thought proper to be highly offended with his father's conduct, and treated the new miſtreſs of the houſe with inſult and contempt. I ſhould not much wonder at this, ſeeing children are ſo apt to deem themſelves unjuſtly treated by a ſecond marriage of their parent; but it was hinted that the boy's jealouſy and diſcontent were excited by no common cauſe. The new mother was not much older than himſelf, had been a ſervant of the family, and a criminal intimacy had ſubſiſted between her, while in that condition, and the ſon. Her marriage with his

father was juſtly accounted by their neighbours a moſt profligate and odious tranſaction. The ſon, perhaps, had in ſuch a caſe a right to ſcold; but he ought not to have carried his anger to ſuch extremes as have been imputed to him. He is ſaid to have grinned upon her with contempt, and even to have called her *ſtrumpet* in the preſence of his father and of ſtrangers.

" It was impoſſible for ſuch a family to keep together. Arthur took leave one night to poſſeſs himſelf of all his father's caſh, mount the beſt horſe in his meadow, and elope. For a time no one knew whither he had gone: at laſt, one was ſaid to have met with him in the ſtreets of this city, metamorphoſed from a ruſtic lad into a fine gentleman. Nothing could be quicker than this change; for he left the country on a Saturday morning, and was ſeen in a French frock and ſilk ſtockings, going into Chriſt's Church the next day. I ſuppoſe he kept it up with a high hand as long as his money laſted.

" My

" My father paid us a visit last week, and among other country news told us that Sawny Mervyn had sold his place. His wife had persuaded him to try his fortune in the western country. The price of his hundred acres here would purchase a thousand there; and the man being very gross and ignorant, and withal quite a simpleton, found no difficulty in perceiving that a thousand are ten times more than a hundred. He was not aware that a rood of ground upon Schuylkill, is tenfold better than an acre on the Tenessee.

" The woman turned out to be an artful profligate. Having sold his ground, and received his money, he placed it in her keeping; and she, to enjoy it with the more security, ran away to the city, leaving him to prosecute his journey to Kentucky, moneyless and alone. Some time after, Mr. Althorpe and I were at the play, when he pointed out to me a group of females in an upper box, one of whom was no other than Betty Lawrence. It was not easy to recognise,

in her preſent gaudy trim, all flaunting with ribbons, and ſhining with trinkets, the ſame Betty who uſed to deal out pecks of potatoes, and ſuperintend her baſket of cantilopes in the Jerſey market, in paſteboard bonnet and linſey petticoat. Her companions were of the infamous claſs. If Arthur were ſtill in the city, there is no doubt that the mother and ſon might renew the ancient terms of their acquaintance.

"The old man, thus robbed and betrayed, ſought conſolation in the bottle, of which he had been at all times over fond. He wandered from one tavern to another, till his credit was exhauſted, and then was ſent to jail, where, I believe, he is likely to continue till his death. Such, my friend, is the hiſtory of the Mervyns."

"What proof," ſaid I, "have you of the immoral conduct of the ſon—of his ill treatment of his mother, and his elopement with his father's horſe and money?"

"I have no proof but the unanimous report of Mervyn's neighbours. Reſpectable and

and honeſt men have affirmed, in my hearing, that they have been preſent when the boy treated his mother in the way that I have deſcribed. I was beſides once in company with the old man, and heard him bitterly inveigh againſt his ſon, and charge him with the fact of ſtealing his horſe and money. I well remember that tears rolled from his eyes while talking on the ſubject. As to his being ſeen in the city the next day after his elopement, dreſſed in a moſt coſtly and faſhionable manner, I can doubt that as little as the reſt, for he that ſaw him was my father; and you, who know my father, know what credit is due to his eyes and his word. He had ſeen Arthur often enough not to be miſtaken, and deſcribed his appearance with great exactneſs. The boy is extremely handſome, give him his due; has dark hazle eyes, auburn hair, and very elegant proportions. His air and gait have nothing of the clown in them: take away his jacket and trowſers, and you have as ſpruce a fellow as ever came from dancing-

ſchool

ſchool or College. He is the exact picture of his mother; and the moſt perfect contraſt to the ſturdy legs, ſquat figure, and broad, unthinking, ſheepiſh face of the father, that can be imagined. You muſt confeſs that his appearance here is a pretty ſtrong proof of the father's aſſertions. The money given for theſe clothes could not poſſibly have been honeſtly acquired. It is to be preſumed that they were bought, or ſtolen; for how elſe ſhould they have been obtained?"

"What was this lad's perſonal deportment during the life of his mother, and before his father's ſecond marriage?"

"Very little to the credit of his heart or his intellects. Being the youngeſt ſon, the only one who at length ſurvived, and having a powerful reſemblance to herſelf, he became the mother's favourite. His conſtitution was feeble, and he loved to ſtroll in the woods more than to plough or ſow. This idleneſs was much againſt the father's inclination and judgment; and indeed it was the foundation of all his vices. When

he

he could be prevailed upon to do any thing, it was in a bungling manner, and so as to prove that his thoughts were fixed on any thing except his business. When his assistance was wanted, he was never to be found at hand. They were compelled to search for him among the rocks and bushes, and he was generally discovered sauntering along the bank of the river, or lolling in the shade of a tree. This disposition to inactivity and laziness in so young a man was very strange: persons of his age are rarely fond of work; but then they are addicted to company, and sports, and exercises. They ride, or shoot, or frolic; but this being moped away his time in solitude, never associated with other young people, never mounted a horse but when he could not help it, and never fired a gun, or angled for a fish in his life. Some people supposed him to be half an idiot, or at least not to be in his right mind; and, indeed, his conduct was so very perverse and singular, that I do not wonder at those who accounted for it in this way."

"But

"But surely," said I, "he had some object of pursuit. Perhaps he was addicted to books."

"Far from it. On the contrary, his aversion to school was as great as his hatred of the plough. He never could get his lessons, or bear the least constraint. He was so much indulged by his mother at home, that tasks and discipline of any kind were intolerable. He was a perpetual truant; till the master one day attempting to strike him, he ran out of the room, and never entered it more. The mother excused and countenanced his frowardness; and the foolish father was obliged to give way. I do not believe he had two months' schooling in his life."

"Perhaps," said I, "he preferred studying by himself, and at liberty. I have known boys, endowed with great curiosity and aptitude to learning, who never could endure set tasks, and spurned at the pedagogue and his rod."

"I have known such likewise; but this was not one of them. I know not whence

he could derive his love of knowledge, or the means of acquiring it. The family were totally illiterate:—the father was a Scotch peasant, whose ignorance was so great, that he could not sign his name. His wife, I believe, could read, and might sometimes decipher the figures in an almanack, but that was all. I am apt to think that the son's ability was not much greater. You might as well look for silver platters or marble tables in his house, as for a book or a pen.

"I remember calling at their house one evening in the winter before last. It was intensely cold; and my father, who rode with me, having business with Sawny Mervyn, we stopped a minute at his gate; and, while the two old men were engaged in conversation, I begged leave to warm myself by the kitchen fire. Here, in the chimney-corner, seated on a block, I found Arthur, busily engaged in *knitting stockings!*—I thought this a whimsical employment for a young active man. I told him so; for I

wanted

wanted to put him to the bluſh; but he ſmiled in my face, and anſwered, without the leaſt diſcompoſure—'Juſt as whimſical a buſineſs for a young active woman.—Pray did you never knit a ſtocking?'

'Yes; but that was from neceſſity.—Were I of a different ſex, or did I poſſeſs the ſtrength of a man, I ſhould rather work in my field, or ſtudy my book.'

'Rejoice that you are a woman then, and are at liberty to purſue that which coſts leaſt labour, and demands moſt ſkill. You ſee, though a man, I uſe your privilege, and prefer knitting yarn to thraſhing my brain with a book, or the barn-floor with a flail.'

'I wonder,' ſaid I, contemptuouſly, 'you do not put on the petticoat as well as handle the needle.'

'Do not wonder,' he replied; 'it is becauſe I hate a petticoat encumbrance as much as I love warm feet. Look there,' offering the ſtocking to my inſpection, 'is it not well done?'

"I did

"I did not touch it, but ſneeringly ſaid—'Excellent!—I wonder you do not apprentice yourſelf to a tailor.'

"He looked at me with an air of ridiculous ſimplicity, and ſaid—'How prone the woman is to *wonder*. You call the work excellent; and yet *wonder* that I do not make myſelf a ſlave to improve my ſkill!—Did you learn needle-work from ſeven years' ſquatting on a tailor's board?—Had you come to me, I would have taught you in a day.'

'I was taught at ſchool.'

'And paid your inſtructor?'

'To be ſure.'

'Twas liberty and money thrown away. Send your ſiſter, if you have one, to me, and I will teach her without either rod or wages.—Will you?'

'You have an old and a violent antipathy, I believe, to any thing like a ſchool.'

'True. It was early and violent. Had not you?'

'No.

'No. I went to school with pleasure; for I thought to read and write were accomplishments of some value.'

'Indeed!—Then I misunderstood you just now. I thought you said that, had you the strength of a man, you should prefer the plough and the book to the needle. Whence, supposing you a female, I inferred that you had a woman's love for the needle, and a fool's hatred of books.'

"My father calling me from without, I now made a motion to go.

'Stay,' continued he, with great earnestness, throwing aside his knitting apparatus, and beginning in great haste to pull off his stockings; 'draw these stockings over your shoes;—they will save your feet from the snow while walking to your horse.'

"Half angry and half laughing, I declined the offer. He had drawn them off, however, and holding them in his hand—'Be persuaded,' said he; 'only lift your feet, and I will slip them on in a trice.'

"Finding

" Finding me positive in my refusal, he dropped the stockings; and, without more ado, caught me up in his arms, rushed out of the room, and, running barefoot through the snow, set me fairly on my horse. All was done in a moment, and before I had time to reflect on his intentions. He then seized my hand, and kissing it with great fervour, exclaimed—

' A thousand thanks to you for not accepting my stockings. You have thereby saved yourself and me the time and toil of drawing on and drawing off. Since you have taught me to wonder, let me practise the lesson in wondering at your folly in wearing worsted shoes and silk stockings, at a season like this. Take my counsel, and turn your silk to worsted, and your worsted to leather; then may you hope for warm and dry feet.—What, leave the gate without a blessing on your counsellor!'

" I spurred my horse into a gallop, glad to escape from so strange a being. I could give you many instances of behaviour equally singular,

ſingular, and which betrayed a mixture of ſhrewdneſs and folly—of kindneſs and impudence, which juſtified perhaps the common notion, that his intellects were unſound. Nothing was more remarkable than his impenetrability to ridicule and cenſure. You might revile him for hours, and he would liſten to you with invincible compoſure. To awaken anger or ſhame in him was impoſſible. He would anſwer, but in ſuch a way as to ſhew him totally unaware of your true meaning. He would afterwards talk to you with all the ſmiling affability and freedom of an old friend. Every one deſpiſed him for his idleneſs and folly, no leſs conſpicuous in his words than his actions; but no one feared him, and few were angry with him, till after the detection of his commerce with Betty, and his inhuman treatment of his father."

"Have you good reaſons for ſuppoſing him to have been illicitly connected with that girl?"

"Yes;

" Yes; ſuch as cannot be diſcredited.—It would not be proper for me to ſtate theſe proofs. Nay, he never denied it. When reminded, on one occaſion, of the inference which every impartial perſon would draw from appearances, he acknowledged, with his uſual placid effrontery, that the inference was unavoidable. He even mentioned other concurring and contemporary incidents, which had eluded the obſervation of his cenſurer, and which added ſtill more force to the concluſion. He was ſtudious to palliate the vices of this woman as long as he was her only paramour; but after her marriage with his father, the tone was changed. He confeſſed that ſhe was tidy, notable, induſtrious; but then ſhe was a proſtitute. When charged with being inſtrumental in making her ſuch, and when his companions dwelt upon the depravity of reviling her for vices which ſhe owed to him —' True,' he would ſay, ' there is depravity and folly in the conduct you deſcribe. Make me out, if you pleaſe, to be a villain.

What

What then?—I was talking not of myself, but of Betty. Still this woman is a proſtitute. If it were I that made her ſuch, with more confidence may I make the charge. But think not that I blame Betty. Place me in her ſituation, and I ſhould have acted juſt ſo. I ſhould have formed juſt ſuch notions of my intereſt, and purſued it by the ſame means. Still, ſay I, I would fain have a different woman for my father's wife, and the miſtreſs of this family."

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

FRUITLESS SEARCH.

THIS converſation was interrupted by a meſſenger from my wife, who deſired my return immediately. I had ſome hopes of meeting with Mervyn, ſome days having now elapſed ſince his parting from us, and not being conſcious of any extraordinary motives for delay. It was Wortley, however, and not Mervyn, to whom I was called.

My friend came to ſhare with me his ſuſpicions and inquietudes reſpecting Welbeck and Mervyn. An accident had newly happened, which had awakened theſe ſuſpicions

afreſh. He deſired a patient audience while he explained them to me. Theſe were his words:—

"To-day a perſon preſented me a letter from a mercantile friend at Baltimore. I eaſily diſcerned the bearer to be a ſea Captain. He was a man of ſenſible and pleaſing aſpect, and was recommended to my friendſhip and counſel in the letter which he brought. The letter ſtated that a man, by name Amos Watſon, by profeſſion a mariner, and a reſident at Baltimore, had diſappeared in the ſummer of laſt year, in a myſterious and incomprehenſible manner.—He was known to have arrived in this city from Jamaica, and to have intended an immediate journey to his family, who lived at Baltimore; but he never arrived there, and no trace of his exiſtence has ſince been diſcovered. The bearer had come to inveſtigate, if poſſible, the ſecret of his fate; and I was earneſtly entreated to afford him all the aſſiſtance and advice in my power, in the proſecution of his ſearch. I expreſſed my willingneſs

willingneſs to ſerve the ſtranger, whoſe name was Williams; and after offering him entertainment at my houſe, which was thankfully accepted, he proceeded to unfold to me the particulars of this affair. His ſtory was this:—

'On the 20th of laſt June I arrived,' ſaid he, 'from the Weſt Indies, in company with Captain Watſon. I commanded the ſhip in which he came as a paſſenger, his own ſhip being taken and confiſcated by the Engliſh. We had long lived in habits of ſtrict friendſhip, and I loved him for his own ſake, as well as becauſe he had married my ſiſter. We landed in the morning, and went to dine with Mr. Keyſler, ſince dead, but who then lived in Water Street. He was extremely anxious to viſit his family; and having a few commiſſions to perform in the city, which would not demand more than a couple of hours, he determined to ſet out next morning in the ſtage. Meanwhile, I had engagements which required me to repair, with the utmoſt expedition, to New-

York. I was ſcarcely leſs anxious than my brother to reach Baltimore, where my friends alſo reſide, but there was an abſolute neceſſity of going eaſtward. I expected, however, to return hither in three days, and then to follow Watſon home. Shortly after dinner we parted—he to execute his commiſſions, and I to embark in the mail.

'In the time prefixed I returned. I arrived early in the morning, and prepared to depart again at noon. Meanwhile, I called at Keyſler's. This is an old acquaintance of Watſon and mine; and, in the courſe of talk, he expreſſed ſome ſurpriſe that Watſon had ſo precipitately deſerted his houſe. I ſtated the neceſſity there was for Watſon's immediate departure ſouthward, and added, that no doubt my brother had explained this neceſſity.

'Why,' ſaid Keyſler, 'it is true Captain Watſon mentioned his intention of leaving town early next day; but then he gave me reaſon to expect that he would ſup and lodge with me that night, whereas he has not made

made his appearance ſince. Beſides, his trunk was brought to my houſe. This, no doubt, he intended to carry home with him, but here it remains ſtill. It is not likely that, in the hurry of departure, his baggage was forgotten. Hence I inferred that he was ſtill in town, and have been puzzling myſelf theſe three days with conjectures as to what is become of him. What ſurpriſes me more is, that, on enquiring among the few friends which he has in this city, I find them as ignorant of his motions as myſelf. I have not, indeed, been wholly without apprehenſions that ſome accident or other has befallen him.

'I was not a little alarmed by this intimation. I went myſelf, agreeably to Keyſler's directions, to Watſon's friends, and made anxious enquiries; but none of them had ſeen my brother ſince his arrival. I endeavoured to recollect the commiſſions which he deſigned to execute; and, if poſſible, to trace him to the ſpot where he laſt appeared. He had ſeveral packets to deliver, one of

which was addreſſed to Walter Thetford. Him, after ſome enquiry, I found out; but unluckily he chanced to be in the country. I found, by queſtioning a clerk who tranſacted his buſineſs in his abſence, that a perſon, who anſwered the minute deſcription which I gave of Watſon, had been there on the day on which I parted with him, and had left papers relative to the capture of one of Thetford's veſſels by the Engliſh. This was the ſum of the information he was able to afford me.

'I then applied to three merchants, for whom my brother had letters:—they all acknowledged the receipt of theſe letters, but they were delivered through the medium of the poſt-office.

'I was extremely anxious to reach home. Urgent engagements compelled me to go on without delay. I had already exhauſted all the means of enquiry within my reach, and was obliged to acquieſce in the belief that Watſon had proceeded homeward at the time appointed, and left, by forgetfulneſs or accident,

accident, his trunk behind him. On examining the books kept at the ſtage-offices, his name nowhere appeared; and no conveyance by water had occurred during the laſt week. Still the only conjecture I could form was, that he had gone homeward.

'Arriving at Baltimore, I found that Watſon had not yet made his appearance. His wife produced a letter which, by the poſt mark, appeared to have been put into the office at Philadelphia on the morning after our arrival, and on which he had deſigned to commence his journey. This letter had been written by my brother in my preſence; but I had diſſuaded him from ſending it, ſince the ſame coach that would convey the letter, was likewiſe to carry himſelf. I had ſeen him put it unwafered in his pocket-book; but this letter, unaltered in any part, and containing money which he had at firſt intended to encloſe in it, was now conveyed to his wife's hand. In this letter he mentioned his deſign of ſetting out for Baltimore on the *twenty firſt*, yet

on that day the letter itſelf had been put into the office.

'We hoped that a ſhort time would clear up this myſtery, and bring the fugitive home; but from that day till the preſent, no atom of intelligence has been received concerning him. The yellow fever, which quickly followed in this city, and my own engagements, have hindered me till now from coming hither, and reſuming my ſearch.

'My brother was one of the moſt excellent of men. His wife loved him to diſtraction, and, together with his children, depended for ſubſiſtence upon his efforts.—You will not, therefore, be ſurpriſed that his diſappearance excited in us the deepeſt conſternation and diſtreſs; but I have other, and peculiar reaſons for wiſhing to know his fate. I gave him ſeveral bills of exchange on merchants of Baltimore, which I had received in payment of my cargo, in order that they might, as ſoon as poſſible, be preſented and accepted: theſe have diſappeared with the bearer. There is likewiſe another circum-

circumſtance that makes his exiſtence of no ſmall value.

'There is an Engliſh family, who formerly reſided in Jamaica, and poſſeſſed an eſtate of great value, but who, for ſome years, have lived in the neighbourhood of Baltimore. The head of this family died a year ago, and left a widow and three daughters. The lady thought it eligible to ſell her huſband's property in Jamaica, the iſland becoming hourly more expoſed to the chances of war and revolution, and transfer it to the United States, where ſhe purpoſes henceforth to reſide. Watſon had been her huſband's friend, and his probity and diſintereſtedneſs being well known, ſhe entruſted him with legal powers to ſell this eſtate.—This commiſſion was punctually performed, and the purchaſe-money was received. In order to confer on it the utmoſt poſſible ſecurity, he rolled up four bills of exchange, drawn upon opulent merchants in London, in a thin ſheet of lead, and depoſiting this roll in a leathern girdle, faſtened it round his

waiſt and under his clothes; a ſecond ſet he gave to me, and a third he diſpatched to Mr. Keyſler, by a veſſel which ſailed a few days before him. On our arrival in this city, we found that Keyſler had received thoſe tranſmitted to him, and which he had been charged to keep till our arrival. They were now produced, and, together with thoſe which I had carried, were delivered to Watſon. By him they were joined to thoſe in the girdle, which he ſtill wore, conceiving this method of conveyance to be ſafer than any other; and at the ſame time imagining it needleſs, in ſo ſhort a journey as remained to be performed, to reſort to other expedients.

'The ſum, which he thus bore about him, was no leſs than ten thouſand pounds ſterling. It conſtituted the whole patrimony of a worthy and excellent family, and the loſs of it reduces them to beggary. It is gone with Watſon; and whither Watſon is gone, it is impoſſible to even gueſs.

'You

'You may now eaſily conceive, Sir, the dreadful diſaſters which may be connected with this man's fate, and with what immeaſurable anxiety his family and friends have regarded his diſappearance. That he is alive, can ſcarcely be believed; for in what ſituation could he be placed in which he would not be able and willing to communicate ſome tidings of his fate to his family?

'Our grief has been unſpeakably aggravated by the ſuſpicions which Mrs. Maurice and her friends have allowed themſelves to admit. They do not ſcruple to inſinuate that Watſon, tempted by ſo great a prize, has ſecretly embarked for England, in order to obtain payment for theſe bills, and retain the money for his own uſe.

'No man was more impatient of poverty than Watſon, but no man's honeſty was more inflexible. He murmured at the deſtiny that compelled him to ſacrifice his eaſe, and riſk his life upon the ocean, in order to procure the means of ſubſiſtence; and all the property which he had ſpent the beſt

part of his life in collecting, had juſt been raviſhed away from him by the Engliſh; but if he had yielded to this temptation at any time, it would have been on receiving theſe bills at Jamaica. Inſtead of coming hither, it would have been infinitely more eaſy and convenient to have embarked directly for London; but none, who thoroughly knew him, can for a moment harbour a ſuſpicion of his truth.

'If he be dead, and if the bills are not to be recovered, yet, to aſcertain this, will at laſt ſerve to vindicate his character. As long as his fate is unknown, his fame will be loaded with the moſt flagrant imputations, and if theſe bills be ever paid in London, theſe imputations will appear to be juſtified. If he has been robbed, the robber will make haſte to ſecure the payment, and the Maurices may not unreaſonably conclude that the robber was Watſon himſelf.'—

"Many other particulars were added by the ſtranger, to ſhew the extent of the evils flowing from the death of his brother, and

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the loſs of the papers which he carried with him.

"I was greatly at a loſs," continued Wortley, "what directions or advice to afford this man. Keyſler, as you know, died early of the peſtilence; but Keyſler was the only reſident in this city with whom Williams had any acquaintance. On mentioning the propriety of preventing the ſale of theſe bills in America by ſome public notice, he told me that this caution had been early taken; and I now remembered ſeeing the advertiſement, in which the bills had been repreſented as having been loſt or ſtolen in this city, and a reward of a thouſand dollars was offered to any one who ſhould reſtore them. This caution had been publiſhed in September, in all the trading towns from Portſmouth to Savannah, but had produced no ſatisfaction.

"I accompanied Williams to the Mayor's office, in hopes of finding in the records of his proceedings, during the laſt ſix months, ſome traces of Watſon; but neither theſe records nor the memory of the magiſtrate, afforded

afforded us any ſatisfaction. Watſon's friends had drawn up, likewiſe, a deſcription of the perſon and dreſs of the fugitive, an account of the incidents attending his diſappearance, and of the papers which he had in his poſſeſſion, with the manner in which theſe papers had been ſecured. Theſe had been already publiſhed in the Southern newſpapers, and have been juſt reprinted in our own. As the former notice had availed nothing, this ſecond expedient was thought neceſſary to be employed.

"After ſome reflection, it occurred to me that it might be proper to renew the attempt which Williams had made to trace the footſteps of his friend to the moment of his final diſappearance. He had purſued Watſon to Thetford's; but Thetford himſelf had not been ſeen, and he had been contented with the vague information of his clerk. Thetford and his family, including his clerk, had periſhed, and it ſeemed as if this ſource of information was dried up. It was poſſible, however, that old Thetford might have ſome know-

knowledge of his nephew's tranſactions, by which ſome light might perhaps be thrown upon this obſcurity. I therefore called on him, but found him utterly unable to afford me the light that I wiſhed. My mention of the packet which Watſon had brought to Thetford, containing documents reſpecting the capture of a certain ſhip, reminded him of the injuries which he had received from Welbeck, and excited him to renew his menaces and imputations on that wretch. Having ſomewhat exhauſted his rhetoric, he proceeded to tell me what connection there was between the remembrance of his injuries, and the capture of this veſſel.

"This veſſel and its cargo were, in fact, the property of Welbeck. They had been ſent to a good market, and had been ſecured by an adequate inſurance. The value of this ſhip and cargo, and the validity of the policy he had taken care to aſcertain by means of his two nephews, one of whom had gone out ſupercargo. This had formed his inducement to lend his three notes to

Welbeck, in exchange for three other notes, the whole amount of which included the *equitable intereſt* of *five per cent. per month* on his own loan. For the payment of theſe notes he by no means relied, as the world foolishly imagined, on the ſeeming opulence and ſecret funds of Welbeck. Theſe were illuſions too groſs to have any influence on him. He was too old a bird to be decoyed into the net by *ſuch* chaff. No; his nephew, the ſupercargo, would of courſe receive the produce of the voyage, and ſo much of this produce as would pay his debt. He had procured the owner's authority to intercept its paſſage from the pocket of his nephew to that of Welbeck. In caſe of loſs, he had obtained a ſimilar ſecurity upon the policy. Jamieſon's proceedings had been the ſame with his own; and no affair in which he had ever engaged, had appeared to be more free from hazard than this. Their calculations, however, though plauſible, were defeated. The ſhip was taken and condemned, for a cauſe

cauſe which rendered the inſurance ineffectual.

"I beſtowed no time in reflecting on this iſſue of extortions and frauds, and on that courſe of events which ſo often diſconcerts the ſtratagems of cunning. The names of Welbeck and Watſon were thus aſſociated together, and filled my thoughts with reſtleſſneſs and ſuſpicion. Welbeck was capable of any wickedneſs. It was poſſible an interview had happened between theſe men, and that the fugitive had been in ſome way inſtrumental in Watſon's fate. Theſe thoughts were mentioned to Williams, whom the name of Welbeck threw into the utmoſt perturbation. On finding that one of this name had dwelt in this city, and that he had proved a villain, he inſtantly admitted the moſt dreary forebodings.

'I have heard,' ſaid Williams, 'the hiſtory of this Welbeck a ſcore of times from my brother. There formerly ſubſiſted a very intimate connection between them. My brother had conferred upon one whom he thought

thought honeſt, innumerable benefits; but all his benefits had been repaid by the blackeſt treachery. Welbeck's character and guilt had often been made the ſubject of talk between us; but, on theſe occaſions, my brother's placid and patient temper forſook him. His grief for the calamities which had ſprung from this man, and his deſire of revenge, burſt all bounds, and tranſported him to a pitch of temporary frenzy. I often enquired in what manner he intended to act, if a meeting ſhould take place between them. He anſwered that doubtleſs he ſhould act like a maniac, in defiance of his ſober principles, and of the duty which he owed his family.

'What,' ſaid I, 'would you ſtab or piſtol him?'

'No, I was not born for an aſſaſſin! I would upbraid him in ſuch terms as the furious moment might ſuggeſt, and then challenge him to a meeting, from which either he or I ſhould not part with life. I would allow time for him to make his peace with

with Heaven, and for me to blaſt his reputation upon earth, and to make ſuch proviſion for my poſſible death as duty and diſcretion would preſcribe.'

'Now nothing is more probable than that Welbeck and my brother have met. Thetford would of courſe mention his name and intereſt in the captured ſhip, and hence the reſidence of this deteſted being in this city would be made known. Their meeting could not take place without ſome dreadful conſequence. I am fearful that to that meeting we muſt impute the diſappearance of my brother.'

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

SUSPICIONS.

"HERE was new light thrown upon the character of Welbeck, and new food administered to my ſuſpicions. No concluſion could be more plauſible than that which Williams had drawn; but how ſhould it be rendered certain? Walter Thetford, or ſome of his family, had poſſibly been witneſſes of ſomething which, added to our previous knowledge, might ſtrengthen or prolong that clue, one end of which ſeemed now to be put into our hands; but Thetford's father-in-law was the only one of his family who,

who, by ſeaſonable flight from the city, had eſcaped the peſtilence. To him, who ſtill reſided in the country, I repaired with all ſpeed, accompanied by Williams.

'The old man being reminded, by a variety of circumſtances, of the incidents of that eventful period, was at length enabled to relate that he had been preſent at the meeting which took place between Watſon and his ſon Walter, when certain packets were delivered by the former, relative, as he quickly underſtood, to the condemnation of a ſhip in which Thomas Thetford had gone ſupercargo. He had noticed ſome emotion of the ſtranger, occaſioned by his ſon's mentioning the concern which Welbeck had in the veſſel. He likewiſe remembered the ſtranger declaring his intention of viſiting Welbeck, and requeſting Walter to afford him directions to his houſe.

'Next morning at the breakfaſt table,' continued the old man, 'I adverted to yeſterday's incidents, and aſked my ſon how Welbeck had borne the news of the loſs of his ſhip.

ſhip.—' He bore it,' ſays Walter, ' as a man of his wealth ought to bear ſo trivial a loſs.' But there was ſomething very ſtrange in his behaviour,' ſays my ſon, ' when I mentioned the name of the Captain who brought the papers; and when I mentioned the Captain's deſign of paying him a viſit, he ſtared upon me for a moment as if he were frightened out of his wits, and then, ſnatching up his hat, ran furiouſly out of the houſe.'—This was all my ſon ſaid upon that occaſion; but, as I have ſince heard, it was on that very night that Welbeck abſconded from his creditors.'

" I have this moment returned from this interview with old Thetford. I come to you, becauſe I thought it poſſible that Mervyn, agreeably to your expectations, had returned, and I wanted to ſee the lad once more. My ſuſpicions with regard to him have been confirmed, and a warrant was this day iſſued for apprehending him as Welbeck's accomplice."

I was ſtartled by this news.—" My friend," ſaid I, " be cautious how you act,

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I beſeech you. You know not in what evils you may involve the innocent. Mervyn I know to be blameleſs; but Welbeck is indeed a villain. The latter I ſhall not be ſorry to ſee brought to juſtice, but the former, inſtead of meriting puniſhment, is entitled to rewards."

"So you believe, on the mere aſſertion of the boy perhaps; his plauſible lies might produce the ſame effect upon me, but I muſt ſtay till he thinks proper to exert his ſkill. The ſuſpicions to which he is expoſed will not eaſily be obviated; but if he has any thing to ſay in his defence, his judicial examination will afford him the ſuitable opportunity. Why are you ſo much afraid to ſubject his innocence to this teſt? It was not till you heard his tale, that your own ſuſpicions were removed. Allow me the ſame privilege of unbelief.

"But you do me wrong in deeming me the cauſe of his apprehenſion. It is Jamieſon and Thetford's work, and they have not proceeded on ſhadowy ſurmiſes and the impulſes

impulſes of mere revenge. Facts have come to light, of which you are wholly unaware, and which, when known to you, will conquer even your incredulity as to the guilt of Mervyn."

"Facts!—let me know them, I beſeech you. If Mervyn has deceived me, there is an end to my confidence in human nature; all limits to diſſimulation, and all diſtinctions between vice and virtue will be effaced; no man's word—no force of collateral evidence, ſhall weigh with me an hair."

"It was time," replied my friend, "that your confidence in ſmooth features and fluent accents ſhould have ended long ago. Till I gained from my preſent profeſſion ſome knowledge of the world—a knowledge which was not gained in a moment, and has not coſt a trifle, I was equally wiſe in my own conceit; and, in order to decide upon the truth of any one's pretenſions, needed only a clear view of his face, and a diſtinct hearing of his words. My folly in that reſpect was only to be cured, however, by

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my own experience, and I ſuppoſe your credulity will yield to no other remedy. Theſe are the facts:—Mrs. Wentworth, the proprietor of the houſe in which Welbeck lived, has furniſhed ſome intelligence reſpecting Mervyn, whoſe truth cannot be doubted, and which affords the ſtrongeſt evidence of a conſpiracy between this lad and his employer. It ſeems that, ſome years ſince, a nephew of this lady left his father's family clandeſtinely, and has not been heard of ſince. This nephew was intended to inherit her fortune, and her anxieties and enquiries reſpecting him have been endleſs and inceſſant. Theſe, however, have been fruitleſs. Welbeck, knowing theſe circumces, and being deſirous of ſubſtituting a girl, whom he had moulded for his purpoſe, in place of the loſt youth, in the affections of the lady while living, and in her teſtament when dead, endeavoured to perſuade her that the youth had died in ſome foreign country. For this end Mervyn was to perſonate a kinſman of Welbeck who had

juſt arrived from Europe, and who had been a witneſs of her nephew's death. A ſtory was, no doubt, to be contrived, where truth ſhould be copied with the moſt exquiſite dexterity; and the lady, being prevailed upon to believe the ſtory, the way was cleared for accompliſhing the remainder of the plot.

"In due time, and after the lady's mind had been artfully prepared by Welbeck, the pupil made his appearance, and, in a converſation full of ſtudied ambiguities, aſſured the lady that her nephew was dead. For the preſent he declined relating the particulars of his death, and diſplayed a conſtancy and intrepidity in reſiſting her entreaties, that would have been admirable in a better cauſe. Before ſhe had time to fathom this painful myſtery, Welbeck's frauds were in danger of detection, and he and his pupil ſuddenly diſappeared.

"While the plot was going forward, there occurred an incident which the plotters had not foreſeen or precluded, and which poſſibly might have created ſome confuſion

or impediment in their deſigns. A bundle was found one night in the ſtreet, conſiſting of ſome coarſe clothes, and containing in the midſt of it the miniature portrait of Mrs. Wentworth's nephew. It fell into the hands of one of that lady's friends, who immediately diſpatched the bundle to her. Mervyn, in his interview with this lady, ſpied the portrait on the mantle-piece. Led by ſome freak of fancy, or ſome web of artifice, he introduced the talk reſpecting her nephew, by boldly claiming it as his; but when the mode in which it had been found was mentioned, he was diſconcerted and confounded, and precipitately withdrew.

"This conduct, and the ſubſequent flight of the lad, afforded ground enough to queſtion the truth of his intelligence reſpecting her nephew; but it has ſince been confuted in a letter juſt received from her brother in England. In this letter ſhe is informed that her nephew had been ſeen, by one who knew him well, in Charleſton; that

ſome intercourſe took place between the youth and the bearer of the news, in the courſe of which the latter had perſuaded the nephew to return to his family, and that the youth had given ſome tokens of compliance. The letter-writer, who was the father of the fugitive, had written to certain friends at Charleſton, entreating them to uſe their influence with the runaway to the ſame end, and, at any rate, to cheriſh and protect him. Thus, I hope, you will admit that the duplicity of Mervyn is demonſtrated."

"The facts which you have mentioned," ſaid I, after ſome pauſe, "partly correſpond with Mervyn's ſtory; but the laſt particular is irreconcileably repugnant to it. Now, for the firſt time, I begin to feel that my confidence is ſhaken. I feel my mind bewildered and diſtracted by the multitude of new diſcoveries which have juſt taken place. I want time to revolve them ſlowly, to weigh them accurately, and to eſtimate their conſequences fully. I am afraid to ſpeak, fearing that, in the preſent trouble of my thoughts, I may

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ſay ſomething which I may afterwards regret. I want a counſellor; but you, Wortley, are unfit for the office. Your judgment is unfurniſhed with the ſame materials; your ſufferings have ſoured your humanity, and biaſſed your candour. The only one qualified to divide with me theſe cares, and aid me in ſelecting the beſt mode of action, is my wife. She is miſtreſs of Mervyn's hiſtory; was an obſerver of his conduct during his abode with us; and is hindered, by her education and temper, from deviating into rigour and malevolence. Will you pardon me, therefore, if I defer commenting on your narrative, till I have had an opportunity of reviewing it, and comparing it with my knowledge of the lad, collected from himſelf and from my own obſervations."

Wortley could not but admit the juſtice of my requeſt, and after ſome deſultory converſation we parted. I haſtened to communicate to my wife the various intelligence which I had lately received. Mrs. Althorpe's portrait of the Mervyns contained lineaments

which the ſummary detail of Arthur did not enable us fully to comprehend. The treatment which the youth is ſaid to have given to his father—the illicit commerce that ſubſiſted between him and his father's wife—the pillage of money and his father's horſe, but ill accorded with the tale which we had heard, and diſquieted our minds with doubts, though far from dictating our belief.

What, however, more deeply abſorbed our attention, was the teſtimony of Williams and of Mrs. Wentworth. That which was myſterious and inſcrutable to Wortley and the friends of Watſon, was luminous to us. The coincidence between the vague hints laboriouſly collected by theſe enquirers, and the narrative of Mervyn, afforded the moſt cogent atteſtation of the truth of that narrative.

Watſon had vaniſhed from all eyes, but the ſpot where reſted his remains, was known to us. The girdle ſpoken of by Williams, would not be ſuſpected to exiſt by his murderer. It was unmoleſted, and was

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doubtleſs buried with him. That which was ſo earneſtly ſought, and which conſtituted the ſubſiſtence of the Maurices, would probably be found adhering to his body. What conduct was incumbent upon me who poſſeſſed this knowledge?

It was juſt to reſtore theſe bills to their true owner; but how could this be done without hazardous proceſſes and tedious diſcloſures? To whom ought theſe diſcloſures to be made? By what authority or agency could theſe half-decayed limbs be dug up, and the loſt treaſure be taken from amidſt the horrible corruption in which it was immerſed?

This ought not to be the act of a ſingle individual—this act would entangle him in a maze of perils and ſuſpicion, of concealments and evaſions, from which he could not hope to eſcape with his reputation inviolate. The proper method was through the agency of the law. It is to this that Mervyn muſt ſubmit his conduct. The ſtory which he told to me, he muſt tell to

the world. Suſpicions have fixed themſelves upon him, which allow him not the privilege of ſilence and obſcurity. While he continued unknown and unthought of, the publication of his ſtory would only give unneceſſary birth to dangers; but now dangers are incurred which it may probably contribute to leſſen, if not to remove.

Meanwhile the return of Mervyn to the city was anxiouſly expected. Day after day paſſed, and no tidings were received. I had buſineſs of an urgent nature which required my preſence in Jerſey, but which, in the daily expectation of the return of my young friend, I poſtponed a week longer than rigid diſcretion allowed. At length I was obliged to comply with the exigence, and left the city; but made ſuch arrangements, that I ſhould be apprized by my wife of Mervyn's return with all practicable expedition.

Theſe arrangements were ſuperfluous, for my buſineſs was diſpatched, and my abſence at an end before the youth had given us any tokens of his approach. I now remembered

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the warnings of Wortley, and his aſſertions that Mervyn had withdrawn himſelf for ever from our view. The event had hitherto unwelcomely coincided with theſe predictions, and a thouſand doubts and miſgivings were awakened.

One evening, while preparing to ſhake off gloomy thoughts by a viſit to a friend, ſome one knocked at my door, and left a billet containing theſe words:

"Dr. Stevens is requeſted to come immediately to the Debtors' Apartments in Prune Street."

This billet was without ſignature. The hand-writing was unknown, and the precipitate departure of the bearer left me wholly at a loſs with reſpect to the perſon of the writer, or the end for which my preſence was required. This uncertainty only haſtened my compliance with the ſummons.

The evening was approaching—a time when the priſon-doors are accuſtomed to be ſhut, and ſtrangers to be excluded. This furniſhed an additional reaſon for diſpatch. As I walked ſwiftly along, I revolved the poſſible motives that might have prompted this meſſage. A conjecture was ſoon formed, which led to apprehenſion and inquietude.

One of my friends, by name Carlton, was embarraſſed with debts which he was unable to diſcharge. He had lately been menaced with arreſt by a creditor not accuſtomed to remit any of his claims. I dreaded that this cataſtrophe had now happened, and called to mind the anguiſh with which this untoward incident would overwhelm his family. I knew his incapacity to take away the claim of his creditor by payment, or to ſooth him into clemency by ſupplication.

So prone is the human mind to create for itſelf diſtreſs, that I was not aware of the uncertainty of this evil till I arrived at the priſon. I checked myſelf at the moment when I opened my lips to utter the name of

my

my friend, and was admitted without any particular enquiries. I ſuppoſed that he by whom I had been ſummoned hither, would meet me in the common room.

The apartment was filled with pale faces and withered forms. The marks of negligence and poverty were viſible in all; but few betrayed, in their features or geſtures, any ſymptoms of concern on account of their condition. Ferocious gaiety or ſtupid indifference ſeemed to ſit upon every brow. The vapour from a heated ſtove, mingled with the fumes of beer and tallow that were ſpilled upon it, and with the tainted breath of ſo promiſcuous a crowd, loaded the ſtagnant atmoſphere. At my firſt tranſition from the cold and pure air without to this noxious element, I found it difficult to breathe. A moment, however, reconciled me to my ſituation, and I looked anxiouſly round to diſcover ſome face which I knew.

Almoſt every mouth was furniſhed with a ſegar, and every hand with a glaſs of porter. Converſation, carried on with much emphaſis

of tone and geſture, was not wanting. Sundry groups, in different corners, were beguiling the tedious hours at whiſt. Others, unemployed, were ſtrolling to and fro, and teſtified their vacancy of thought and care by humming or whiſtling a tune.

I foſtered the hope that my prognoſtics had deceived me. This hope was ſtrengthened by reflecting that the billet received was written in a different hand from that of my friend. Meanwhile I continued my ſearch. Seated on a bench, ſilent and aloof from the crowd, his eyes fixed upon the floor, and his face half concealed by his hand, a form was at length diſcovered, which verified all my conjectures and fears. It was Carlton!

My heart drooped, and my tongue faltered at this ſight. I ſurveyed him for ſome minutes in ſilence. At length, approaching the bench on which he ſat, I touched his hand, and awakened him from his reverie. He looked up. A momentary gleam of joy and ſurpriſe was ſucceeded by a gloom deeper than before.

It was plain that my friend needed consolation. He was governed by an exquisite sensibility to disgrace. He was impatient of constraint. He shrunk, with fastidious abhorrence, from the contact of the vulgar and the profligate. His constitution was delicate and feeble. Impure airs, restraint from exercise, unusual aliment, unwholesome or incommodious accommodations, and perturbed thoughts were, at any time, sufficient to generate disease, and to deprive him of life.

To these evils he was now subjected. He had no money wherewith to purchase food. He had been dragged hither in the morning. He had not tasted a morsel since his entrance. He had not provided a bed on which to lie; or enquired in what room, or with what companions the night was to be spent.

Fortitude was not among my friend's qualities. He was more prone to shrink from danger than encounter it, and to yield to the flood rather than sustain it; but it is just to observe that his anguish, on the present

preſent occaſion, aroſe not wholly from ſelfiſh conſiderations. His parents were dead, and two ſiſters were dependant on him for ſupport. One of theſe was nearly of his own age; the other was ſcarcely emerged from childhood. There was an intellectual as well as a perſonal reſemblance between my friend and his ſiſters. They poſſeſſed his phyſical infirmities, his vehement paſſions, and refinements of taſte; and the miſery of his condition was tenfold increaſed, by reflecting on the feelings which would be awakened in them by the knowledge of his ſtate, and the hardſhips to which the loſs of his ſuccour would expoſe them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

A PRISON SCENE.

IT was not in my power to releaſe my friend by the payment of his debt; but, by contracting with the keeper of the priſon for his board, I could ſave him from famine, and, by ſuitable exertions, could procure him lodging as convenient as the time would admit. I could promiſe to conſole and protect his ſiſters, and, by cheerful tones and frequent viſits, diſpel ſome part of the evil which encompaſſed him.

After the firſt ſurpriſe had ſubſided, he enquired by what accident this meeting had been

been produced. Conſcious of my incapacity to do him any eſſential ſervice, and unwilling to make me a partaker in his miſeries, he had forborne to inform me of his condition.

This aſſurance was liſtened to with ſome wonder. I ſhewed him the billet. It had not been written by him. He was a ſtranger to the penmanſhip. None but the attorney and officer were apprized of his fate. It was obvious to conclude that this was the interpoſition of ſome friend, who, knowing my affection for Carlton, had taken this myſterious method of calling me to his ſuccour.

Conjectures, as to the author and motives of this interpoſition, were ſuſpended by more urgent conſiderations. I requeſted an interview with the keeper, and enquired how Carlton could be beſt accommodated.

He ſaid that all his rooms were full but one, which, in conſequence of the diſmiſſion of three perſons in the morning, had at preſent but one tenant. This perſon had lately arrived,

arrived, was ſick, and had with him at this time one of his friends. Carlton might divide the chamber with this perſon. No doubt his conſent would be readily given; though this arrangement, being the beſt, muſt take place whether he conſented or not.

This conſent I reſolved immediately to ſeek, and for that purpoſe deſired to be led to the chamber. The door of the apartment was ſhut. I knocked for admiſſion. It was inſtantly opened, and I entered. The firſt perſon who met my view was—Arthur Mervyn!

I ſtarted with aſtoniſhment. Mervyn's countenance betrayed nothing but ſatisfaction at the interview. The traces of fatigue and anxiety gave place to tenderneſs and joy. It readily occurred to me that Mervyn was the writer of the note which I had lately received. To meet him within theſe walls, and at this time, was the moſt remote and undeſirable of all contingencies. The ſame hour had thus made me acquainted with the kindred

kindred and unwelcome fate of two beings whom I moſt loved.

I had ſcarcely time to return his embrace, when, taking my hand, he led me to a bed that ſtood in one corner. There was ſtretched upon it one, whom a ſecond glance enabled me to call by his name, though I had never before ſeen him. The vivid portrait which Mervyn had drawn, was conſpicuous in the ſunken and haggard viſage before me. This face had, indeed, proportions and lines which could never be forgotten or miſtaken. Welbeck, when once ſeen or deſcribed, was eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind. He had ſtronger motives than other men for abſtaining from guilt; the difficulty of concealment or diſguiſe being tenfold greater in him than in others, by reaſon of the indelible and eye-attracting marks which Nature had ſet upon him.

He was pallid and emaciated. He did not open his eyes on my entrance; he ſeemed to be aſleep: but before I had time to exchange glances with Mervyn, or to enquire into

into the nature of the ſcene, he awoke. On ſeeing me, he ſtarted, and caſt a look of upbraiding on my companion. The latter comprehended his emotion, and endeavoured to appeaſe him.

"This perſon," ſaid he, "is my friend. He is likewiſe a phyſician; and, perceiving your ſtate to require medical aſſiſtance, I ventured to ſend for him."

Welbeck replied, in a contemptuous and indignant tone—"Thou miſtakeſt my condition, boy! My diſeaſe lies deeper than his ſcrutiny will ever reach. I had hoped thou wert gone. Thy importunities are well meant, but they aggravate my miſeries."

He now roſe from the bed, and continued, in a firm and reſolute tone—"You are intruders into this apartment. It is mine, and I deſire to be left alone."

Mervyn returned at firſt no anſwer to this addreſs. He was immerſed in perplexity. At length raiſing his eyes from the floor, he ſaid—"My intentions are indeed honeſt, and I am grieved that I want the power of perſuaſion.

perſuaſion. To-morrow, perhaps, I may reaſon more cogently with your deſpair, or your preſent mood may be changed. To aid my own weakneſs, I will entreat the aſſiſtance of this friend."

Theſe words rouſed a new ſpirit in Welbeck. His confuſion and anger increaſed; his tongue faltered as he exclaimed—"Good God! what mean you?—Headlong and raſh as you are, you will not ſhare with this perſon your knowledge of me?"

Here he checked himſelf, conſcious that the words he had already uttered, tended to the very end which he dreaded. This conſciouſneſs, added to the terror of more ample diſcloſures, which the ſimplicity and rectitude of Mervyn might prompt him to make, chained up his tongue, and covered him with diſmay.

Mervyn was not long in anſwering—

"I comprehend your fears and your wiſhes. I am bound to tell you the truth. To this perſon your ſtory has already been told. Whatever I have witneſſed under your roof

roof—whatever I have heard from your lips, have been faithfully diſcloſed to him."

The countenance of Welbeck now betrayed a mixture of incredulity and horror. For a time his utterance was ſtifled by his complicated feelings.

"It cannot be. So enormous a deed is beyond thy power. Thy qualities are marvellous. Every new act of thine outſtrips the laſt, and belies the neweſt calculations. But this—this perfidy exceeds——this outrage upon promiſes—this violation of faith—this blindneſs to the future, is incredible."

There he ſtopped; while his looks ſeemed to call upon Mervyn for a contradiction of his firſt aſſertion.

"I know full well how inexpiably ſtupid or wicked my act will appear to you; but I will not prevaricate or lie.—I repeat that every thing is known to him. Your birth—your early fortunes—the incidents at Charleſton and Wilmington—your treatment of the brother and ſiſter—your interview with Watſon, and the fatal iſſue of that interview

view—I have told him all, juſt as it was told to me."

Here the ſhock that was felt by Welbeck overpowered his caution and his ſtrength. He ſunk upon the ſide of the bed. His air was ſtill incredulous, and he continued to gaze upon Mervyn. He ſpoke in a tone leſs vehement.

"And haſt thou then betrayed me?—Haſt thou ſhut every avenue to my return to honour?—Am I known to be a ſeducer and aſſaſſin—to have meditated all crimes, and to have perpetrated the worſt?

"Infamy and death are my portion!—I know they are reſerved for me; but I did not think to receive them at thy hands—that under that innocent guiſe there lurked a heart treacherous and cruel.—But go; leave me to myſelf. This ſtroke has exterminated my remnant of hope. Leave me to prepare my neck for the halter, and my lips for this laſt and bittereſt cup!"

Mervyn ſtruggled with his tears, and replied—"All this was foreſeen, and all this I

was

was prepared to endure.—My friend and I will withdraw, as you wiſh; but to-morrow I return, not to vindicate my faith or my humanity—not to make you recant your charges, or forgive the faults which I ſeem to have committed, but to extricate you from your preſent evil, or to arm you with fortitude."

So ſaying, he led the way out of the room. I followed him in ſilence. The ſtrangeneſs and abruptneſs of this ſcene left me no power to aſſume a part in it. I looked on with new and indeſcribable ſenſations. I reached the ſtreet before my recollection was perfectly recovered. I then reflected on the purpoſe that had led me to Welbeck's chamber. This purpoſe was yet unaccompliſhed. I deſired Mervyn to ſtop a moment, while I returned into the houſe. I once more enquired for the keeper, and told him I ſhould leave to him the province of acquainting Welbeck with the neceſſity of ſharing his apartment with a ſtranger. I ſpeedily rejoined Mervyn in the ſtreet.

I loſt no time in requiring an explanation of the ſcene that I had witneſſed.

"How became you again the companion of Welbeck?—Why did you not inform me by letter of your arrival at Malverton, and of what occurred during your abſence?—What is the fate of Mr. Hadwin and of Wallace?"

"Alas!" ſaid he, "I perceive that, though I have written, you have never received my letters. The tale of what has occurred ſince we parted, is long and various. I am not only willing, but eager to communicate the ſtory; but this is no ſuitable place. Have patience till we reach your houſe. I have involved myſelf in perils and embarraſſments, from which I depend upon your counſel and aid to releaſe me."

I had ſcarcely reached my own door, when I was overtaken by a ſervant, whom I knew to belong to the family in which Carlton and his ſiſters reſided. Her meſſage therefore was readily gueſſed. She came, as I expected, to enquire for my friend, who had

had left his home in the morning with a ſtranger, and had not yet returned. His abſence had occaſioned ſome inquietude, and his ſiſter had ſent this meſſage to me, to procure what information reſpecting the cauſe of his detention I was able to give.

My perplexity hindered me for ſome time from anſwering. I was willing to communicate the painful truth with my own mouth. I ſaw the neceſſity of putting an end to her ſuſpenſe, and of preventing the news from reaching her with fallacious aggravations or at an unſeaſonable time.

I told the meſſenger that I had juſt parted with Mr. Carlton, that he was well, and that I would ſpeedily come and acquaint his ſiſter with the cauſe of his abſence.

Though burning with curioſity reſpecting Mervyn and Welbeck, I readily poſtponed its gratification till my viſit to Miſs Carlton was performed. I had rarely ſeen this lady; my friendſhip for her brother, though ardent, having been lately formed, and chiefly matured by interviews at my houſe. I had

 deſigned

deſigned to introduce her to my wife, but various accidents had hindered the execution of my purpoſe. Now conſolation and counſel were more needed than ever; and delay or reluctance in beſtowing them, would have been in a high degree unpardonable.

I therefore parted with Mervyn, requeſting him to await my return, and promiſing to perform the engagement which compelled me to leave him with the utmoſt diſpatch. On entering Miſs Carlton's apartment, I aſſumed an air of as much tranquillity as poſſible. I found the lady ſeated at a deſk, with a pen in her hand, and parchment before her. She greeted me with affectionate dignity, and caught from my countenance that cheerfulneſs, of which on my entrance ſhe was deſtitute.

"You come," ſaid ſhe, "to inform me what has made my brother a truant to-day. Till your meſſage was received, I was ſomewhat anxious. This day he uſually ſpends in rambling through the fields; but ſo bleak and ſtormy an atmoſphere I ſuppoſe would prevent

prevent his excurſion.—Pray, Sir, what is it detains him?"

To conquer my embarraſſment, and introduce the ſubject by indirect and cautious means, I eluded her queſtion, and caſting an eye at the parchment—"How now," ſaid I, "this is ſtrange employment for a lady. I knew that my friend purſued this trade, and lived by binding faſt the bargains which others made; but I knew not that the pen was ever uſurped by his ſiſter."

"The uſurpation was prompted by neceſſity. My brother's impatient temper and delicate frame unfitted him for this trade. He purſued it with no leſs reluctance than diligence, devoting to the taſk three nights in the week, and the whole of each day. It would long ago have killed him, if I had not bethought myſelf of ſharing his taſks. The pen was irkſome and toilſome at firſt, but uſe has made it eaſy, and far more eligible than the needle, which was formerly my only tool.

"This arrangement affords my brother

opportunities of exercise and recreation, without diminishing our profits; and my time, though not less constantly, is more agreeably, as well as more lucratively employed than formerly."

"I admire your reasoning. By this means provision is made against untoward accidents. If sickness should disable him, you are qualified to pursue the same means of support."

At these words the lady's countenance changed. She put her hand on my arm, and said, in a fluttering and hurried accent —"Is my brother sick?"

"No; he is in perfect health. My observation was a harmless one. I am sorry to observe your readiness to draw alarming inferences. If I were to say that your scheme is useful to supply deficiencies, not only when your brother is disabled by sickness, but when thrown by some inhuman creditor into jail, no doubt you would perversely and hastily infer that he is now in prison."

I had scarcely ended the sentence, when the piercing eyes of the lady were anxiously fixed

fixed upon mine. After a moment's pauſe, he exclaimed—

"The inference indeed is too plain. I know his fate. It has long been foreſeen and expected, and I have ſummoned up my equanimity to meet it.—Would to Heaven he may find the calamity as light as I ſhould find it!—but I fear his too irritable ſpirit."

When her fears were confirmed, ſhe ſtarted out into no vehemence of exclamation. She quickly ſuppreſſed a few tears, which would not be withheld, and liſtened to my narrative of what had lately occurred, with tokens of gratitude.

Formal conſolation was ſuperfluous. Her mind was indeed more fertile than my own in thoſe topics which take away its keeneſt edge from affliction. She obſerved that it was far from being the heavieſt calamity which might have happened. The creditor was perhaps vincible by arguments and ſupplications. If theſe ſhould ſucceed, the diſaſter would not only be removed, but that ſecurity from future moleſtation be gained,

to which they had for a long time been ſtrangers.

Should he be obdurate, their ſtate was far from being hopeleſs. Carlton's ſituation allowed him to purſue his profeſſion. His gains would be equal, and his expences would not be augmented. By their mutual induſtry, they might hope to amaſs ſufficient to diſcharge the debt at no very remote period.

What ſhe chiefly dreaded, was the pernicious influence of dejection and ſedentary labour on her brother's health. Yet this was not to be conſidered as inevitable. Fortitude might be inſpired by exhortation and example; and no condition precluded us from every ſpecies of bodily exertion. The leſs inclined he ſhould prove to cultivate the means of deliverance and happineſs within his reach, the more neceſſary it became for her to ſtimulate and fortify his reſolution.

If I were captivated by the charms of this lady's perſon and carriage, my reverence was excited by theſe proofs of wiſdom and energy.

I zeal-

I zealouſly promiſed to concur with her in every ſcheme ſhe ſhould adopt for her own or her brother's advantage; and after ſpending ſome hours with her, took my leave.

I now regretted the ignorance in which I had hitherto remained reſpecting this lady. That ſhe was, in an eminent degree, feminine and lovely, was eaſily diſcovered; but intellectual weakneſs had been raſhly inferred from external frailty. She was accuſtomed to ſhrink from obſervation, and reſerve was miſtaken for timidity. I called on Carlton only when numerous engagements would allow, and when, by ſome accident, his cuſtomary viſits had been intermitted. On thoſe occaſions my ſtay was ſhort, and my attention chiefly confined to her brother. I now reſolved to atone for my ancient negligence, not only by my own aſſiduities, but by thoſe of my wife.

On my return home, I found Mervyn and my wife in earneſt diſcourſe. I anticipated the ſhock which the ſenſibility of the latter would receive from the tidings which I had

to communicate reſpecting Carlton. I was unwilling, and yet perceived the neceſſity of diſcloſing the truth. I deſired to bring theſe women, as ſoon as poſſible, to the knowledge of each other; but the neceſſary prelude to this, was an acquaintance with the diſaſter that had happened.

Scarcely had I entered the room, when Mervyn turned to me, and ſaid, with an air of anxiety and impatience—"Pray, my friend, have you any knowledge of Francis Carlton?"

The mention of this name by Mervyn produced ſome ſurpriſe. I acknowledged my acquaintance with him.

"Do you know in what ſituation he now is?"

In anſwer to this queſtion, I ſtated by what ſingular means his ſituation had been made known to me, and the purpoſe, from the accompliſhment of which I had juſt returned. I enquired, in my turn, whence originated this queſtion?

He

He had overheard the name of Carlton in the prison. Two persons were communing in a corner, and accident enabled him to catch this name, though uttered by them in a half whisper, and to discover that the person talked about, had lately been conveyed hither.

This name was not now heard for the first time: it was connected with remembrances that made him anxious for the fate of him to whom it belonged. In discourse with my wife, this name chanced to be again mentioned, and his curiosity was roused afresh. I was willing to communicate all that I knew; but Mervyn's own destiny was too remarkable not to absorb all my attention, and I refused to discuss any other theme till that were fully explained. He postponed his own gratification to mine, and consented to relate the incidents that had happened from the moment of our separation till the present.

CHAP. XIII.

ARTHUR MERVYN'S TALE.

AT parting with you, my purpoſe was to reach the abode of the Hadwins as ſpeedily as poſſible; I travelled therefore with diligence. Setting out ſo early, I expected, though on foot, to reach the end of my journey before noon. The activity of muſcles is no obſtacle to thought: ſo far from being inconſiſtent with intenſe muſing, it is, in my own caſe, propitious to that ſtate of mind.

Probably no one had ſtronger motives for ardent meditation than I. My ſecond journey to the city was prompted by reaſons, and

and attended by incidents that ſeemed to have a preſent exiſtence. To think upon them, was to view, more deliberately and thoroughly, objects and perſons that ſtill hovered in my ſight. Inſtead of their attributes being already ſeen, and their conſequences at an end, it ſeemed as if a ſeries of numerous years and unintermitted contemplation were requiſite to comprehend them fully, and bring into exiſtence their moſt momentous effects.

If men be chiefly diſtinguiſhed from each other by the modes in which attention is employed, either on external and ſenſible objects, or merely on abſtract ideas and the creatures of reflection, I may juſtly claim to be enrolled in the ſecond claſs. My exiſtence is a ſeries of thoughts, rather than of motions. Ratiocination and deduction leave my ſenſes unemployed. The fulneſs of my fancy renders my eye vacant and inactive. Senſations do not precede and ſuggeſt, but follow, and are ſecondary to the acts of my mind.

There was one motive, however, which made me less inattentive to the scene that was continually shifting before and without me, than I am wont to be. The loveliest form which I had hitherto seen, was that of Clemenza Lodi. I recalled her condition as I had witnessed it, as Welbeck had described, and as you had painted it. The past was without remedy; but the future was, in some degree, within our power to create and to fashion. Her state was probably dangerous. She might already be forlorn, beset with temptation or with anguish; or danger might only be approaching her, and the worst evils be impending ones.

I was ignorant of her state. Could I not remove this ignorance?—Would not some benefit redound to her from beneficent and seasonable interposition?

You had mentioned that her abode had lately been with Mrs. Villars, and that this lady still resided in the country. The residence had been sufficiently described, and I perceived that I was now approaching it.

In a ſhort time I ſpied its painted roof and five chimnies through an avenue of *catalpas*.

When oppoſite the gate which led into this avenue, I pauſed. It ſeemed as if this moment were to decide upon the liberty and innocence of this being. In a moment I might place myſelf before her, aſcertain her true condition, and point out to her the path of honour and ſafety. This opportunity might be the laſt. Longer delay might render interpoſition fruitleſs.

But how was I to interpoſe?—I was a ſtranger to her language, and ſhe was unacquainted with mine. To obtain acceſs to her, it was neceſſary only to demand it. But how ſhould I explain my views, and ſtate my wiſhes when an interview was gained?—And what expedient was it in my power to propoſe?

"Now," ſaid I, "I perceive the value of that wealth which I have been accuſtomed to deſpiſe. The power of eating and drinking—the nature and limits of exiſtence and phyſical enjoyment, are not changed or enlarged

enlarged by the increaſe of wealth. Our corporeal and intellectual wants are ſupplied at little expence; but our own wants are the wants of others, and that which remains, after our own neceſſities are obviated, it is always eaſy and juſt to employ in relieving the neceſſities of others.

"There are no ſuperfluities in my ſtore. It is not in my power to ſupply this unfortunate girl with decent raiment and honeſt bread. I have no houſe to which to conduct her. I have no means of ſecuring her from famine and cold.

Yet, though indigent and feeble, I am not deſtitute of friends and of home. Cannot ſhe be admitted to the ſame aſylum to which I am now going?—This thought was ſudden and new. The more it was revolved, the more plauſible it ſeemed. This was not merely the ſole expedient, but the beſt that could have been ſuggeſted.

The Hadwins were friendly, hoſpitable, unſuſpicious. Their board, though ſimple and uncouth, was wholeſome and plenteous.

Their

Their reſidence was ſequeſtered and obſcure, and not obnoxious to impertinent enquiries and malignant animadverſion. Their frank and ingenuous temper would make them eaſy of perſuaſion, and their ſympathies were prompt and overflowing.

"I am nearly certain," continued I, "that they will inſtantly afford protection to this deſolate girl. Why ſhall I not anticipate their conſent, and preſent myſelf to their embraces and their welcomes in her company?"

Slight reflection ſhewed me that this precipitation was improper. Whether Wallace had ever arrived at Malverton—whether Mr. Hadwin had eſcaped infection—whether his houſe were the abode of ſecurity and quiet, or a ſcene of deſolation—were queſtions yet to be determined. The obvious and beſt proceeding was to haſten forward, to afford the Hadwins, if in diſtreſs, the feeble conſolations of my friendſhip; or, if their ſtate were happy, to procure their concurrence to my ſcheme reſpecting Clemenza.

Actuated

Actuated by these considerations, I resumed my journey. Looking forward, I perceived a chaise and horse standing by the left-hand fence, at the distance of some hundred yards. This object was not uncommon or strange, and therefore it was scarcely noticed. When I came near, however, methought I recognised in this carriage the same in which my importunities had procured a seat for the languishing Wallace, in the manner which I have formerly related.

It was a crazy vehicle and old-fashioned. When once seen, it could scarcely be mistaken or forgotten. The horse was held by his bridle to a post, but the seat was empty. My solicitude with regard to Wallace's destiny, of which he to whom the carriage belonged, might possibly afford me some knowledge, made me stop, and reflect on what measures it was proper to pursue.

The owner could not be at a great distance from this spot. His absence would probably be short. By lingering a few minutes, an interview might be gained, and the uncer-

tainty

tainty and ſuſpenſe of ſome hours be there-by precluded. I therefore waited, and the ſame perſon whom I had formerly encountered, made his appearance, in a ſhort time, from under a copſe that ſkirted the road.

He recogniſed me with more difficulty than attended my recognition of him. The circumſtances, however, of our firſt meeting were eaſily recalled to his remembrance. I eagerly enquired when and where he had parted with the youth who had been on that occaſion entruſted to his care.

He anſwered that, on leaving the city, and inhaling the purer air of the fields and woods, Wallace had been in a wonderful degree invigorated and refreſhed. An inſtantaneous and total change appeared to have been wrought in him: he no longer languiſhed with fatigue or fear, but became full of gaiety and talk.

The ſuddenneſs of this tranſition, the levity with which he related and commented on his recent dangers and evils, excited the aſtoniſhment of his companion, to whom he not

not only communicated the hiſtory of his diſeaſe, but imparted many anecdotes of a humorous kind. Some of theſe my companion repeated. I heard them with regret and diſſatisfaction. They betokened a mind vitiated by intercourſe with the thoughtleſs and depraved of both ſexes, and particularly with infamous and profligate women.

My companion proceeded to mention that Wallace's exhilaration laſted but for a ſhort time, and diſappeared as ſuddenly as it had appeared. He was ſeized with deadly ſickneſs, and inſiſted upon leaving the carriage, whoſe movements ſhocked his ſtomach and head to an inſupportable degree. His companion was not void of apprehenſions on his own account, but was unwilling to deſert him, and endeavoured to encourage him. His efforts were vain. Though the neareſt houſe was at the diſtance of ſome hundred yards, and though it was probable that the inhabitants of this houſe would refuſe to accommodate one in his condition, yet Wallace could not be prevailed on to proceed;

proceed; and, in spite of persuasion and remonstrance, left the carriage, and threw himself on the grassy bank beside the road.

This person was not unmindful of the hazard which he incurred by contact with a sick man. He conceived himself to have performed all that was consistent with duty to himself and to his family; and Wallace, persisting in affirming that by attempting to ride farther, he should merely hasten his death, was at length left to his own guidance.

These were unexpected and mournful tidings. I had fondly imagined that his safety was put beyond the reach of untoward accidents. Now, however, there was reason to suppose him to have perished by a lingering and painful disease, rendered fatal by the selfishness of mankind, by the want of seasonable remedies, and exposure to inclement airs. Some uncertainty, however, rested on his fate. It was my duty to remove it, and to carry to the Hadwins no mangled and

defective

defective tale. Where, I asked, had Wallace and his companion parted?

It was about three miles further onward. The spot, and the house within view from the spot, were accurately described. In this house it was possible that Wallace had sought an asylum, and some intelligence respecting him might be gained from its inhabitants. My informant was journeying to the city, so that we were obliged to separate.

In consequence of this man's description of Wallace's deportment, and the proofs of a dissolute and thoughtless temper which he had given, I began to regard his death as an event less deplorable. Such an one was unworthy of a being so devoutly pure, so ardent in fidelity and tenderness as Susan Hadwin. If he loved, it was probable that, in defiance of his vows, he would seek a different companion. If he adhered to his first engagements, his motives would be sordid, and the disclosure of his latent defects might produce more exquisite misery to his wife, than

than his premature death or treacherous deſertion.

The preſervation of this man was my ſole motive for entering the infected city, and ſubjecting my own life to the hazards, from which my eſcape may almoſt be eſteemed miraculous. Was not the end diſproportioned to the means?—Was there arrogance in believing my life a price too great to be given for his?

I was not indeed ſorry for the paſt. My purpoſe was juſt, and the means which I ſelected were the beſt my limitted knowledge applied. My happineſs ſhould be drawn from reflection on the equity of my intentions. That theſe intentions were fruſtrated by the ignorance of others, or my own, was the conſequence of human frailty. Honeſt purpoſes, though they may not beſtow happineſs on others, will at leaſt ſecure it to him who foſters them.

By theſe reflections my regrets were diſſipated, and I prepared to rejoice alike, whether Wallace ſhould be found to have eſcaped, or to have

have perished. The house to which I had been directed was speedily brought into view. I enquired for the master or mistress of the mansion, and was conducted to a lady of a plain and housewifely appearance.

My curiosity was fully gratified. Wallace, whom my description easily identified, had made his appearance at her door on the evening of the day on which he left the city. The dread of the fever was descanted on with copious and rude eloquence. I supposed her eloquence on this theme to be designed to apologize to me for her refusing entrance to the sick man. The peroration, however, was different. Wallace was admitted, and suitable attention paid to his wants.

Happily the guest had nothing to struggle with but extreme weakness. Repose, nourishing diet, and salubrious air restored him in a short time to health. He lingered under this roof for three weeks, and then, without any professions of gratitude, or offers of pecuniary remuneration, or information

ation of the courſe which he determined to take, he left them.

Theſe facts, added to that which I had previouſly known, threw no advantageous light upon the character of Wallace. It was obvious to conclude that he had gone to Malverton, and thither there was nothing to hinder me from following him.

Perhaps one of my groſſeſt defects is a precipitate temper. I chuſe my path ſuddenly, and purſue it with impetuous expedition. In the preſent inſtance, my reſolution was conceived with unheſitating zeal, and I walked the faſter, that I might the ſooner execute it. Miſs Hadwin deſerved to be happy. Love was in her heart the all-abſorbing ſentiment. A diſappointment there was a ſupreme calamity. Depravity and folly muſt aſſume the guiſe of virtue before it can claim her affection. This diſguiſe might be maintained for a time; but its detection muſt inevitably come, and the ſooner this detection takes place, the more beneficial it muſt prove.

I re-

I reſolved to unboſom myſelf, with equal and unbounded confidence, to Wallace and his miſtreſs. I would chuſe for this end not the moment when they were ſeparate, but that in which they were together. My knowledge, and the ſources of my knowledge, relative to Wallace, ſhould be unfolded to the lady with ſimplicity and truth. The lover ſhould be preſent to confute, to extenuate, or to verify the charges.

During the reſt of the day theſe images occupied the chief place in my thoughts.—The road was miry and dark, and my journey proved to be more tedious and fatiguing than I expected. At length, juſt as the evening cloſed, the well-known habitation appeared in view. Since my departure, winter had viſited the world, and the aſpect of nature was deſolate and dreary. All around this houſe was vacant, negligent, forlorn. The contraſt between theſe appearances, and thoſe which I had noticed on my firſt approach to it, when the ground and the trees were decked with the luxuriance

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and vivacity of ſummer, was mournful, and ſeemed to foretoken ill. My ſpirits droopcd as I noticed the general inactivity and ſilence.

I entered, without warning, the door that led into the parlour. No face was to be ſeen, or voice heard. The chimney was ornamented, as in ſummer, with evergreen ſhrubs. Though it was now the ſecond month of froſt and ſnow, fire did not appear to have been lately kindled on this hearth.

This was a circumſtance from which nothing good could be deduced. Had there been thoſe to ſhare its comforts who had ſhared them on former years, this was the place and hour at which they commonly aſſembled. A door on one ſide led, through a narrow entry, into the kitchen. I opened this door, and paſſed towards the kitchen.

No one was there but an old man, ſquatted in the chimney-corner. His face, though wrinkled, denoted undecayed health and an unbending ſpirit. A homeſpun coat,

leathern breeches wrinkled with age, and blue yarn hoſe, were well ſuited to his lean and ſhrivelled form. On his right knee was a wooden bowl, which he had juſt repleniſhed from a pipkin of haſty-pudding ſtill ſmoking on the coals; and in his left-hand a ſpoon, which he had at that moment plunged into a bottle of molaſſes that ſtood beſide him.

This action was ſuſpended by my entrance. He looked up, and exclaimed—"Heyday! who's this that comes into other people's houſes, without ſo much as ſaying—"By your leave!'——What's thee buſineſs?—Who's thee want?"

I had never ſeen this perſonage before. I ſuppoſed it to be ſome new domeſtic, and enquired for Mr. Hadwin.

"Ah!" replied he with a ſigh, "William Hadwin! Is it he thee wants?—Poor man, he is gone to reſt many days ſince!"

My heart ſunk within me at theſe tidings. —"Dead!" ſaid I, "do you mean that he is dead?"—This exclamation was uttered

in a tone of ſome vehemence. It attracted the attention of ſome one who was ſtanding without, who immediately entered the kitchen—it was Eliza Hadwin! The moment ſhe beheld me, ſhe ſhrieked aloud, and, ruſhing into my arms, fainted away.

The old man dropped his bowl; and, ſtarting from his ſeat, ſtared alternately at me and at the breathleſs girl. My emotion, made up of joy, and ſorrow, and ſurpriſe, rendered me for a moment powerleſs as ſhe. At length he ſaid—"I underſtand this—I know who thee is, and will tell her thee's come!"—So ſaying, he haſtily left the room.

CHAP. XIV.

A BURIAL.

IN a ſhort time this gentle girl recovered her ſenſes. She did not withdraw herſelf from my ſuſtaining arm, but leaning on my boſom, ſhe reſigned herſelf to paſſionate weeping. I did not endeavour to check this effuſion, believing that its influence would be ſalutary.

I had not forgotten the thrilling ſenſibility and artleſs graces of this girl. I had not forgotten the ſcruples which had formerly made me check a paſſion whoſe tendency was eaſily diſcovered. Theſe new proofs of her

her affection were at once mournful and delightful. The untimely fate of her father and my friend preſſed with new force upon my heart, and my tears, in ſpite of my fortitude, mingled with her's.

The attention of both was preſently attracted by a faint ſcream which proceeded from above. Immediately tottering footſteps were heard in the paſſage, and a figure ruſhed into the room, pale, emaciated, haggard, and wild. She caſt a piercing glance at me, uttered a feeble exclamation, and ſunk upon the floor without ſigns of life.

It was not difficult to comprehend this ſcene. I now conjectured what ſubſequent enquiry confirmed, that the old man had miſtaken me for Wallace, and had carried to the elder ſiſter the news of his return. This fatal diſappointment of hopes that had nearly been extinct, and which were now ſo powerfully revived, could not be endured by a frame verging to diſſolution.

This object recalled all the energies of Eliza, and engroſſed all my ſolicitude. I

lifted the fallen girl in my arms, and, guided by her ſiſter, carried her to her chamber. I had now leiſure to contemplate the changes which a few months had made in this lovely frame. I turned away from the ſpectacle with anguiſh; but my wandering eyes were recalled by ſome potent faſcination, and fixed in horror upon a form which evinced the laſt ſtage of decay. Eliza knelt on one ſide, and, leaning her face upon the bed, endeavoured in vain to ſmother her ſobs. I ſat on the other motionleſs, and holding the paſſive and withered hand of the ſufferer.

I watched with ineffable ſolicitude the return of life. It returned at length, but merely to betray ſymptoms that it would ſpeedily depart for ever. For a time my faculties were palſied, and I was made an impotent ſpectator of the ruin that environed me. This puſillanimity quickly gave way to reſolutions and reflections better ſuited to the exigencies of the time.

The firſt impulſe was to ſummon a phyſician; but it was evident that the patient had been

been ſinking by ſlow degrees to this ſtate, and that the laſt ſtruggle had begun. Nothing remained but to watch her while expiring, and perform for her, when dead, the rites of interment. The ſurvivor was capable of conſolation and of ſuccour. I went to her, and drew her gently into another apartment. The old man, tremulous and wonderſtruck, ſeemed anxious to perform ſome ſervice. I directed him to kindle a fire in Eliza's chamber. Meanwhile I perſuaded my gentle friend to remain in this chamber, and reſign to me the performance of every office which her ſiſter's condition required. I ſat beſide the bed of the dying Suſan till the mortal ſtruggle was paſſed.

I perceived that the houſe had no inhabitant beſide the two females and the old man. I went in ſearch of the latter, and found him crouched as before, at the kitchen fire, ſmoking his pipe. I placed myſelf on the ſame bench, and entered into converſation with him.

I gathered from him that he had for many years been Mrs Hadwin's ſervant. That lately he had cultivated a ſmall farm in this neighbourhood for his own advantage. Stopping one day in October at the tavern, he heard that his old maſter had lately been in the city, had caught *the fever*, and after his return had died with it. The moment he became ſick, his ſervants fled from the houſe, and the neighbours refuſed to approach it. The taſk of attending his ſick bed was allotted to his daughters, and it was by their hands that his grave was dug, and his body covered with earth. The ſame terror of infection exiſted after his death as before, and theſe hapleſs females were deſerted by all mankind.

Old Caleb was no ſooner informed of theſe particulars, than he hurried to the houſe, and had ſince continued in their ſervice. His heart was kind, but it was eaſily ſeen that his ſkill extended only to execute the directions of another. Grief for the death of Wallace and her father preyed upon the health

health of the elder daughter. The younger became her nurſe, and Caleb was always at hand to execute any orders, the performance of which was on a level with his underſtanding. Their neighbours had not withheld their good offices; but they were ſtill terrified and eſtranged by the phantoms of peſtilence.

During the laſt week Suſan had been too weak to riſe from her bed; yet ſuch was the energy communicated by the tidings that Wallace was alive, and had returned, that ſhe leaped upon her feet, and ruſhed down ſtairs. How little did that man deſerve ſo ſtrenuous and immortal an affection!

I would not allow myſelf to ponder on the ſufferings of theſe women. I endeavoured to think only of the beſt expedients for putting an end to theſe calamities. After a moment's deliberation, I determined to go to a houſe at ſome miles' diſtance; the dwelling of one, who, though not exempt from the reigning panic, had ſhewn more generoſity towards theſe unhappy girls, than

others. During my former abode in this diſtrict, I had aſcertained his character, and found him to be compaſſionate and liberal.

Overpowered by fatigue and watching, Eliza was no ſooner relieved by my preſence of ſome portion of her cares, than ſhe ſunk into profound ſlumber. I directed Caleb to watch the houſe till my return, which ſhould be before midnight, and then ſet out for the dwelling of Mr. Ellis.

The weather was temperate and moiſt, and rendered the footing of the meadows extremely difficult. The ground that had lately been frozen, and covered with ſnow, was now changed into gullies and pools; and this was no time to be faſtidious in the choice of paths. A brook, ſwelled by the recent *thaw*, was likewiſe to be paſſed. The rail which I had formerly placed over it by way of bridge, had diſappeared, and I was obliged to wade through it. At length I approached the houſe to which I was going.

At ſo late an hour, farmers and farmers' ſervants are uſually abed, and their threſhold is entruſted to their watch-dogs. Two belonged to Mr. Ellis, whoſe ferocity and vigilance were truly formidable to a ſtranger; but I hoped that in me they would recogniſe an old acquaintance, and ſuffer me to approach. In this I was not miſtaken. Though my perſon could not be diſtinctly ſeen by ſtarlight, they ſeemed to ſcent me from afar, and met me with a thouſand careſſes.

Approaching the houſe, I perceived that its tenants were retired to their repoſe. This I expected, and haſtened to awake Mr. Ellis by knocking briſkly at the door. Preſently he looked out of a window above, and in anſwer to his enquiries, in which impatience at being ſo unſeaſonably diſturbed was mingled with anxiety, I told him my name, and entreated him to come down, and allow me a few minutes' converſation. He ſpeedily dreſſed himſelf, and opening the kitchen-door, we ſeated ourſelves before the fire.

My appearance was ſufficiently adapted to excite his wonder. He had heard of my elopement from the houſe of Mr. Hadwin; he was a ſtranger to the motives that prompted my departure, and to the events that had befallen me, and no interview was more diſtant from his expectations than the preſent. His curioſity was written in his features, but this was no time to gratify it. The end that I now had in view was to procure accommodation for Eliza Hadwin in this man's houſe. For this purpoſe it was my duty to deſcribe with ſimplicity and truth the inconveniences which at preſent ſurrounded her, and to relate all that had happened ſince my arrival.

I perceived that my tale excited his compaſſion, and I continued with new zeal to paint to him the helpleſſneſs of this girl. The death of her father and ſiſter left her the property of this farm. Her ſex and age diſqualified her for ſuperintending the harveſt-field and the thraſhing-floor; and no expedient was left but to leaſe the land

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to another, and, taking up her abode in the family of some kinsman or friend, to subsist, as she might easily do, upon the rent. Meanwhile her continuance in this house was equally useless and dangerous, and I insinuated to my companion the propriety of immediately removing her to his own.

Some hesitation and reluctance appeared in him, which I immediately ascribed to an absurd dread of infection. I endeavoured, by appealing to his reason as well as to his pity, to conquer this dread. I pointed out the true cause of the death of the elder daughter, and assured him the youngest knew no indisposition but that which arose from distress. I offered to save him from any hazard that might attend his approaching the house, by accompanying her hither myself. All that her safety required was that his doors should not be shut against her when she presented herself before them.

Still was he fearful and reluctant; and, at length, mentioned that her uncle resided not more than sixteen miles farther; that he

was

was her natural protector, and he dared to say would find no difficulty in admitting her into his house. For his part, there might be reason in what I said, but he could not bring himself to think but there was still some danger of *the fever*. It was right to assist people in distress, to be sure; but to risk his own life he did not think to be his duty. He was no relation of the family, and it was the duty of relations to help each other. Her uncle was the proper person to assist her, and no doubt he would be as willing as he was able.

The marks of dubiousness and indecision which accompanied these words, encouraged me in endeavouring to subdue his scruples. The increase of his aversion to my scheme kept pace with my remonstrances, and he finally declared that he would, on no account, consent to it.

Ellis was by no means hard of heart. His determination did not prove the coldness of his charity, but merely the strength of his fears. He was himself an object more of

compassion

compaſſion than of anger; and he acted like the man whoſe fear of death prompts him to puſh his companion from the plank which ſaved him from drowning, but which is unable to ſuſtain them both. Finding him invincible to my entreaties, I thought upon the expedient which he ſuggeſted of ſeeking the protection of her uncle. It was true that the loſs of parents had rendered her uncle her legal protector. His knowledge of the world; his houſe, and property, and influence would, perhaps, fit him for this office in a more eminent degree than I was fitted. To ſeek a different aſylum might, indeed, be unjuſt to both; and, after ſome reflection, I not only diſmiſſed the regret which Ellis's refuſal had given me, but even thanked him for the intelligence and counſel which he had afforded me. I took leave of him, and haſtened back to Hadwin's.

Eliza, by Caleb's report, was ſtill aſleep. There was no urgent neceſſity for awakening her; but ſomething was forthwith to be done with regard to the unhappy girl that

was

was dead. The proceeding incumbent on us was obvious. All that remained was to dig a grave, and to depoſit the remains with as much ſolemnity and decency as the time would permit. There were two methods of doing this. I might wait till the next day, till a coffin could be made and conveyed hither; till the woman, whoſe trade it was to make, and put on the habiliments aſſigned by cuſtom to the dead, could be ſought out, and hired to attend; till kindred friends and neighbours could be ſummoned to the obſequies; till a carriage were provided to remove the body to a burying-ground, belonging to a meeting-houſe, and five miles diſtant; till thoſe, whoſe trade it was to dig graves, had prepared one, within the ſacred incloſure, for her reception;—or, neglecting this toilſome, tedious, and expenſive ceremonial, I might ſeek the grave of Hadwin, and lay the daughter by the ſide of her parent.

Perhaps I was wrong in my preference of the latter mode. The cuſtoms of burial may,

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in moſt caſes, be in themſelves proper. If the cuſtoms be abſurd, yet it may be generally proper to adhere to them: but, doubtleſs, there are caſes in which it is our duty to omit them. I conceived the preſent caſe to be ſuch an one.

The ſeaſon was bleak and inclement. Much time, labour, and expence would be required to go through the cuſtomary rites. There was none but myſelf to perform theſe, and I had not the ſuitable means. The miſery of Eliza would only be prolonged by adhering to theſe forms; and her fortune be needleſſly diminiſhed by the expences unavoidably to be incurred.

After muſing upon theſe ideas for ſome time, I roſe from my ſeat, and deſired Caleb to follow me. We proceeded to an outer ſhed, where farmers' tools uſed to be kept. I ſupplied him and myſelf with a ſpade, and requeſted him to lead me to the ſpot where Mr. Hadwin was laid.

He betrayed ſome heſitation to comply, and appeared ſtruck with ſome degree of alarm,

alarm, as if my purpose had been to molest, instead of to secure, the repose of the dead. I removed his doubts by explaining my intentions; but he was scarcely less shocked on discovering the truth, than he had been alarmed by his first suspicions. He stammered out his objections to my scheme. There was but one mode of burial he thought that was decent and proper, and he could not be free to assist me in pursuing any other.

Perhaps Caleb's aversion to the scheme might have been easily overcome; but I reflected that a mind like his was at once flexible and obstinate. He might yield to arguments and entreaties, and act by their immediate impulse; but the impulse passed away in a moment, old and habitual convictions were resumed, and his deviation from the beaten track would be merely productive of compunction. His aid on the present occasion, though of some use, was by no means indispensable. I forbore to solicit his concurrence, or even to vanquish the

the ſcruples he entertained againſt directing me to the grave of Hadwin. It was a groundleſs ſuperſtition that made one ſpot more ſuitable for this purpoſe than another. I deſired Caleb, in a mild tone, to return to the kitchen, and leave me to act as I thought proper. I then proceeded to the orchard.

One corner of the field was ſomewhat above the level of the reſt. The talleſt tree of the group grew there, and there I had formerly placed a bench, and made it my retreat at periods of leiſure. It had been recommended by its ſequeſtered ſituation, its luxuriant verdure, and profound quiet. On one ſide was a potato-field, on the other a *melon-patch*; and before me, in rows, ſome hundreds of apple-trees. Here I was accuſtomed to ſeek the benefits of contemplation, and ſtudy the manuſcripts of Lodi. A few months had paſſed ſince I had laſt viſited this ſpot. What revolutions had ſince occurred, and how gloomily contraſted was my preſent purpoſe with what had formerly led me hither!

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In this ſpot I had haſtily determined to dig the grave of Suſan. The grave was dug. All that I deſired was a cavity of ſufficient dimenſions to receive her. This being made, I returned to the houſe, lifted the corpſe in my arms, and bore it without delay to the ſpot. Caleb ſeated in the kitchen, and Eliza aſleep in her chamber, were wholly unapprized of my motions. The grave was covered, the ſpade replaced under the ſhed, and my ſeat by the kitchen fire reſumed in a time apparently too ſhort for ſo ſolemn and momentous a tranſaction.

I look back upon this incident with emotions not eaſily deſcribed. It ſeems as if I acted with too much precipitation—as if inſenſibility, and not reaſon, had occaſioned that clearneſs of conception, and beſtowed that firmneſs of muſcles, which I then experienced. I neither trembled nor wavered in my purpoſe. I bore in my arms the being whom I had known and loved, through the whiſtling gale and intenſe darkneſs of a winter's

winter's night; I heaped earth upon her limbs, and covered them from human obſervation, without fluctuations or tremors, though not without feelings that were awful and ſublime.

Perhaps ſome part of my ſtedfaſtneſs was owing to my late experience, and ſome minds may be more eaſily inured to perilous emergencies than others. If reaſon acquires ſtrength only by the diminution of ſenſibility, perhaps it is juſt for ſenſibility to be diminiſhed.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

AN ACCIDENT.

THE ſafety of Eliza was the object that now occupied my cares. To have ſlept, after her example, had been moſt proper; but my uncertainty with regard to her fate, and my deſire to conduct her to ſome other home, kept my thoughts in perpetual motion. I waited with impatience till ſhe ſhould awake, and allow me to conſult with her on plans for futurity.

Her ſleep terminated not till the next day had ariſen. Having recovered the remembrance of what had lately happened, ſhe

ſhe enquired for her ſiſter. She wanted to view once more the face, and kiſs the lips, of her beloved Suſan. Some relief to her anguiſh ſhe expected to derive from this privilege.

When informed of the truth, when convinced that Suſan had diſappeared for ever, ſhe broke forth into freſh paſſion. It ſeemed as if her loſs were not hopeleſs or complete as long as ſhe was ſuffered to behold the face of her ſiſter, and to touch her lips. She accuſed me of acting without warrant and without juſtice, of defrauding her of her deareſt and only conſolation, and of treating her ſiſter's ſacred remains with barbarous indifference and rudeneſs.

I explained in the gentleſt terms the reaſons for my conduct. I was not ſurpriſed or vexed that ſhe at firſt treated them as futile, and as heightening my offence. Such was the impulſe of a grief, which was properly excited by her loſs. To be tranquil and ſtedfaſt, in the midſt of the uſual cauſes of impetuoſity and agony, is either the prerogative

prerogative of wiſdom that ſublimes itſelf above all ſelfiſh conſiderations, or the badge of giddy and unfeeling folly.

The torrent was at length exhauſted. Upbraiding was at an end; and gratitude, and tenderneſs, and implicit acquieſcence in any ſcheme which my prudence ſhould ſuggeſt, ſucceeded. I mentioned her uncle as one to whom it would be proper, in her preſent diſtreſs, to apply.

She ſtarted, and betrayed uneaſineſs at this name. It was evident that ſhe by no means concurred with me in my notions of propriety—that ſhe thought with averſion of ſeeking her uncle's protection. I requeſted her to ſtate her objections to this ſcheme, or to mention any other which ſhe thought preferable.

She knew nobody. She had not a friend in the world but myſelf. She had never been out of her father's houſe. She had no relation but her uncle Philip, and he—ſhe could not live with him. I muſt not inſiſt upon her going to his houſe. It was not

the

the place for her. She ſhould never be happy there.

I was at firſt inclined to ſuſpect in my friend ſome capricious and groundleſs antipathy. I deſired her to explain what in her uncle's character made him ſo obnoxious. She refuſed to be more explicit, and perſiſted in thinking that his houſe was no ſuitable abode for her.

Finding her, in this reſpect, invincible, I ſought for ſome other expedient. Might ſhe not eaſily be accommodated as a boarder in the city, or ſome village, or in a remote quarter of the country? Ellis, her neareſt and moſt opulent neighbour, had refuſed to receive her; but there were others who had not his fears. There were others, within the compaſs of a day's journey, who were ſtrangers to the cauſe of Hadwin's death. But would it not be culpable to take advantage of that ignorance? Their compliance ought not to be the reſult of deception.

While thus engaged, the incidents of my late journey recurred to my remembrance, and I aſked, is not the honeſt woman who entertained Wallace, juſt ſuch a perſon as that of whom I am in ſearch? Her treatment of Wallace ſhews her to be exempt from chimerical fears, proves that ſhe has room in her houſe for an occaſional inmate.

Encouraged by theſe views, I told my weeping companion that I had recollected a family in which ſhe would be kindly treated; and that, if ſhe choſe, we would not loſe a moment in repairing thither. Horſes, belonging to the farm, grazed in the meadows, and a couple of theſe would carry us in a few hours to the place which I had ſelected for her reſidence. On her eagerly aſſenting to this propoſal, I enquired in whoſe care, and in what ſtate, our preſent habitation ſhould be left.

The father's property now belonged to the daughter. Eliza's mind was quick, active, and ſagacious; but her total inexperience gave her ſometimes the appearance

of folly. She was eager to fly from this house, and to resign herself and her property, without limitation or condition, to my controul. Our intercourse had been short; but she relied on my protection and counsel as absolutely as she had been accustomed to do upon her father's

She knew not what answer to make to my enquiry. Whatever I pleased to do, was the best. What did I think ought to be done?

"Ah!" thought I, "sweet, artless, and simple girl! how wouldst thou have fared, if Heaven had not sent me to thy succour? There are beings in the world who would make a selfish use of thy confidence—who would beguile thee at once of innocence and property. Such am not I. Thy welfare is a precious deposit, and no father or brother could watch over it with more solicitude than I will do."

I was aware that Mr. Hadwin might have fixed the destination of his property, and the guardianship of his daughters, by will. On suggesting this to my friend, it instantly

reminded her of an incident that took place after his laſt return from the city. He had drawn up his will, and gave it into Suſan's poſſeſſion, who placed it in a drawer, whence it was now taken by my friend.

By this will his property was now found to be bequeathed to his two daughters; and his brother, Philip Hadwin, was named executor, and guardian to his daughters till they ſhould be twenty years old.

This name was no ſooner heard by my friend, than ſhe exclaimed, in a tone of affright—"Executor!—my uncle! What is that? What power does that give him?"

"I know not exactly the power of executors. He will doubtleſs have poſſeſſion of your property till you are twenty years of age. Your perſon will likewiſe be under his care till that time."

"Muſt he decide where I am to live?"

"He is veſted with all the power of a father."

This aſſurance excited the deepeſt conſternation. She fixed her eyes on the ground,

and

and was loſt, for a time, in the deepeſt reverie. Recovering, at length, ſhe ſaid, with a ſigh—"What if my father had made no will?"

"In that caſe a guardian could not be diſpenſed with; but the right of naming him would belong to yourſelf."

"And my uncle would have nothing to do with my affairs?"

"I am no lawyer," ſaid I; "but I preſume all authority over your perſon and property would devolve upon the guardian of your own choice."

"Then I am free!"

Saying this, with a ſudden motion ſhe tore in ſeveral pieces the will, which, during this dialogue, ſhe had held in her hand, and threw the fragments into the fire.

No action was more unexpected to me than this. My aſtoniſhment hindered me from attempting to reſcue the paper from the flames. It was conſumed in a moment. I was at a loſs in what manner to regard this ſacrifice. It denoted a force of mind little

in unifon with that fimplicity and helpleffnefs which this girl had hitherto difplayed. It argued the deepeft apprehenfions of ill treatment from her uncle. Whether his conduct had juftified this violent antipathy, I had no means of judging. Mr. Hadwin's choice of him, as his executor, was certainly one proof of his integrity.

My abftraction was noticed by Eliza with vifible anxiety. It was plain that fhe dreaded the impreffion which this act of feeming temerity had made upon me.

"Do not be angry with me," faid fhe; "perhaps I have done wrong, but I could not help it. I have but one guardian and one protector."

The deed was irrevocable. In my prefent ignorance of the domeftic hiftory of the Hadwins, I was unqualified to judge how far circumftances might extenuate or juftify the act. On both accounts, therefore, it was improper to expatiate upon it.

It was concluded to leave the care of the houfe to honeft Caleb, to faften clofets and drawers,

drawers, and, carrying away the money which was found in one of them, and which amounted to no inconſiderable ſum, to repair to the houſe formerly mentioned. The air was cold; a heavy ſnow began to fall in the night; the wind blew tempeſtuouſly; and we were compelled to confront it.

In leaving her dwelling, in which ſhe had ſpent her whole life, the unhappy girl gave way afreſh to her ſorrow. It made her feeble and helpleſs. When placed upon the horſe, ſhe was ſcarcely able to maintain her ſeat. Already chilled by the cold, blinded by the drifting ſnow, and cut by the blaſt, all my remonſtrances were needed to inſpire her with reſolution.

I am not accuſtomed to regard the elements, or ſuffer them to retard or divert me from any deſign that I have formed. I had overlooked the weak and delicate frame of my companion, and made no account of her being leſs able to ſupport cold and fatigue than myſelf. It was not till we had made ſome progreſs in our way, that I

began to view, in their true light, the obſtacles that were to be encountered. I conceived it, however, too late to retreat, and endeavoured to puſh on with ſpeed.

My companion was a ſkilful rider, but her ſteed was refractory and unmanageable. She was able, however, to curb his ſpirit till we had proceeded ten or twelve miles from Malverton. The wind and the cold became too violent to be longer endured, and I reſolved to ſtop at the firſt houſe which ſhould preſent itſelf to my view, for the ſake of refreſhment and warmth.

We now entered a wood of ſome extent, at the termination of which I remembered that a dwelling ſtood. To paſs this wood, therefore, with expedition, was all that remained before we could reach a hoſpitable aſylum. I endeavoured to ſuſtain, by this information, the ſinking ſpirits of my companion. While buſy in converſing with her, a blaſt of irreſiſtible force twiſted off the higheſt branch of a tree before us. It fell in the midſt of the road, at the diſtance of a few

a few feet from her horſe's head. Terrified by this accident, the horſe ſtarted from the path, and, ruſhing into the wood, in a moment threw himſelf and his rider on the ground, by encountering the rugged ſtock of an oak.

I diſmounted, and flew to her ſuccour. The ſnow was already died with the blood which flowed from ſome wound in her head, and ſhe lay without ſenſe or motion. My terrors did not hinder me from anxiouſly ſearching for the hurt which was received, and aſcertaining the extent of the injury. Her forehead was conſiderably bruiſed; but, to my unſpeakable joy, the blood flowed from the noſtrils, and was therefore to be regarded as no mortal ſymptom.

I lifted her in my arms, and looked around me for ſome means of relief. The houſe at which I propoſed to ſtop, was upwards of a mile diſtant. I remembered none that was nearer. To place the wounded girl on my own horſe, and proceed gently to the houſe in queſtion, was the ſole expedient;

but at preſent ſhe was ſenſeleſs, and might, on recovering, be too feeble to ſuſtain her own weight.

To recall her to life was my firſt duty; but I was powerleſs, or unacquainted with the means. I gazed upon her features, and endeavoured, by preſſing her in my arms, to inſpire her with ſome warmth. I looked towards the road, and liſtened for the wiſhed-for ſound of ſome carriage that might be prevailed on to ſtop and receive her. Nothing was more improbable than that either pleaſure or buſineſs would induce men to encounter ſo chilling and vehement a blaſt. To be lighted on by ſome traveller was, therefore, a hopeleſs event.

Meanwhile Eliza's ſwoon continued, and my alarm increaſed. What effect her half-frozen blood would have in prolonging this condition, or preventing her return to life, awakened the deepeſt apprehenſions. I left the wood, ſtill bearing her in my arms, and re-entered the road, from the deſire of deſcrying, as ſoon as poſſible, the coming paſſenger.

paſſenger. I looked this way and that, and again liſtened. Nothing but the ſweeping blaſt, rent and falling branches, and ſnow that filled and obſcured the air, were perceivable. Each moment retarded the courſe of my own blood, and ſtiffened my ſinews, and made the ſtate of my companion more deſperate. How was I to act? To periſh myſelf, or ſee her periſh, was an ignoble fate: courage and activity were ſtill able to avert it. My horſe ſtood near, docile and obſequious; to mount him, and to proceed on my way, holding my lifeleſs burthen in my arms, was all that remained.

At this moment my attention was called by ſeveral voices iſſuing from the wood. It was the note of gaiety and glee. Preſently a ſleigh, with ſeveral perſons of both ſexes, appeared in a road which led through the foreſt into that in which I ſtood. They moved at a quick pace, but their voices were huſhed, and they checked the ſpeed of their horſes on diſcovering us. No occurrence was more auſpicious than this; for I relied

with perfect confidence on the benevolence of these persons, and as soon as they came near, claimed their assistance.

My story was listened to with sympathy, and one of the young men, leaping from the sleigh, assisted me in placing Eliza in the place which he had left. A female, of sweet aspect and engaging manners, insisted upon turning back, and hastening to the house, where it seems her father resided, and which the party had just left. I rode after the sleigh, which in a few minutes arrived at the house.

The dwelling was spacious and neat; and a venerable man and woman, alarmed by the quick return of the young people, came forth to know the cause. They received their guest with the utmost tenderness, and provided her with all the accommodations which her condition required. Their daughter relinquished the scheme of pleasure in which she had been engaged; and, compelling her companions to depart without her, remained to nurse and console my friend.

A little

A little time ſhewed that no laſting injury had been ſuffered. Contuſions, more troubleſome than dangerous, and eaſily curable by ſuch applications as rural and traditional wiſdom has diſcovered, were the only conſequences of the fall. My mind, being relieved from apprehenſions on this ſcore, had leiſure to reflect upon the uſe which might be made of the preſent ſtate of things.

When I marked the ſtructure of this houſe, and the features and deportment of its inhabitants, methought I diſcerned a powerful reſemblance between this family and Hadwin's. It ſeemed as if ſome benignant power had led us hither as to the moſt ſuitable aſylum that could be obtained, and in order to ſupply to the forlorn Eliza the place of thoſe parents and that ſiſter ſhe had loſt. I conceived that, if their concurrence could be gained, no abode was more ſuitable that this. No time was to be loſt in gaining this concurrence. The curioſity of our hoſt and hoſteſs, whoſe name was Curling, ſpeedily afforded me an opportunity

opportunity to diſcloſe the hiſtory and real ſituation of my young friend. There were no motives to reſerve or prevarication. There was nothing which I did not faithfully and circumſtantially relate. I concluded with ſtating my wiſhes that they would admit my friend as a boarder into their houſe.

The old man was warm in his concurrence. His wife betrayed ſome ſcruples, which, however, her huſband's arguments and mine removed. I did not even ſuppreſs the tenor and deſtruction of the will, and the antipathy which Eliza had conceived for her uncle, and which I declared myſelf unable to explain. It preſently appeared that Mr. Curling had ſome knowledge of Philip Hadwin, and that the latter had acquired the repute of being obdurate and profligate. He employed all means to accompliſh his ſelfiſh ends, and would probably endeavour to uſurp the property which his brother had left. To provide againſt his power and his malice would be particularly incumbent on us; and my new friend readily promiſed his aſſiſtance in the meaſures which we ſhould take to that end.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

DOUBTS OF LOVE.

THE ſtate of my feelings may be eaſily conceived to conſiſt of mixed, but, on the whole, of agreeable ſenſations. The death of Hadwin and his elder daughter could not be thought upon without keen regrets. Theſe it were uſeleſs to indulge, and were outweighed by reflections on the perſonal ſecurity in which the ſurvivor was now placed. It was hurtful to expend any unprofitable cares upon the dead, while there exiſted one to whom they could be of eſſential benefit, and

and in whoſe happineſs they would find an ample compenſation.

This happineſs, however, was ſtill incomplete. It was ſtill expoſed to hazard, and much remained to be done, before adequate proviſion was made againſt the worſt of evils —poverty. I now found that Eliza, being only fifteen years old, ſtood in need of a guardian, and that the forms of law required that ſome one ſhould make himſelf her father's adminiſtrator. Mr. Curling, being tolerably converſant with theſe ſubjects, pointed out the mode to be purſued, and engaged to act on this occaſion as Eliza's friend.

There was another topic on which my happineſs, as well as that of my friend, required us to form ſome deciſion. I formerly mentioned that, during my abode at Malverton, I had not been inſenſible to the attractions of this girl. An affection had ſtolen upon me, for which it was eaſily diſcovered that I ſhould not have been denied a ſuitable return. My reaſons for ſtifling

these emotions at that time, have been mentioned. It may now be asked what effect subsequent events had produced on my feelings, and how far partaking and relieving her distresses had revived a passion, which may readily be supposed to have been at no time entirely extinguished.

The impediments which then existed were removed. Our union would no longer risk the resentment or sorrow of her excellent parent. She had no longer a sister to divide with her the property of the farm, and make what was sufficient for both, when living together, too little for either separately. Her youth and simplicity required, beyond most others, a legal protector; and her happiness was involved in the success of those hopes which she took no pains to conceal.

As to me, it seemed at first view as if every incident conspired to determine my choice. Omitting all regard to the happiness of others, my own interest could not fail to recommend a scheme, by which the precious benefits of competence and independence might

might be honeſtly obtained. The excurſions of my fancy had ſometimes carried me beyond the bounds preſcribed by my ſituation; but they were, nevertheleſs, limited to that field to which I had once ſome proſpect of acquiring a title. All I wanted for the baſis of my gaudieſt and moſt dazzling ſtructures, were a hundred acres of arable and meadow land. Here my ſpirit of improvement, my zeal to invent and apply new maxims of houſehold luxury and convenience, new modes and inſtruments of tillage, new arts connected with orchard, garden, and corn-field, were ſupplied with abundant ſcope. Though the want of theſe would not benumb my activity, or take away content, the poſſeſſion would confer exquiſite and permanent enjoyments.

My thoughts have ever hovered over the images of wife and children with more delight than over any other. My fancy was always active on this theme, and its reveries ſufficiently ecſtatic and glowing; but ſince my intercourſe with Eliza, my ſcattered viſions

viſions were collected and concentered. I had now a form and features before me—a ſweet and melodious voice vibrated in my ear; my ſoul was filled, as it were, with her lineaments and geſtures, actions and looks. All ideas, poſſeſſing any relation to beauty or ſex, appeared to aſſume this ſhape; they kept an immoveable place in my mind—they diffuſed around them an ineffable complacency. Love is merely of value as a prelude to a more tender, intimate, and ſacred union. Was I not in love?—and did I not pant after the irrevocable bonds, the boundleſs privileges of wedlock?

The queſtion which others might aſk, I have aſked myſelf—Was I not in love?—I am really at a loſs for an anſwer. There ſeemed to be irreſiſtible weight in the reaſons why I ſhould refuſe to marry, and even forbear to foſter love in my friend. I conſidered my youth, my defective education, and my limited views. I had paſſed from my cottage into the world. I had acquired, even in my tranſient ſojourn among the buſy

haunts

haunts of men, more knowledge than the lucubrations and employments of all my previous years had conferred. Hence I might infer the childlike immaturity of my underſtanding, and the rapid progreſs I was ſtill capable of making. Was this an age to form an irrevocable contract—to chuſe the companion of my future life—the aſſociate of my ſchemes of intellectual and benevolent activity?

I had reaſon to contemn my own acquiſitions; but were not thoſe of Eliza ſtill more ſlender?—Could I rely upon the permanence of her equanimity, and her docility to my inſtructions?—What qualities might not time unfold, and how little was I qualified to eſtimate the character of one, whom no viciſſitude or hardſhip had approached before the death of her father—whoſe ignorance was indeed great, when it could juſtly be ſaid even to exceed my own?

Should I mix with the world, enrol myſelf in different claſſes of ſociety, be a witneſs to new ſcenes, might not my modes of judging

udging undergo eſſential variations?—Might I not gain the knowledge of beings, whoſe virtue was the gift of experience and the growth of knowledge—who joined to the modeſty and charms of woman the benefits of education, the maturity and ſtedfaſtneſs of age, and with whoſe character and ſentiments my own would be much more congenial than they could poſſibly be with the extreme youth, ruſtic ſimplicity, and mental imperfections of Eliza Hadwin?

To ſay truth, I was now conſcious of a revolution in my mind. I can ſcarcely aſſign its true cauſe. No tokens of it appeared during my late retreat to Malverton. Subſequent incidents, perhaps, joined with the influence of meditation, had generated new views. On my firſt viſit to the city, I had met with nothing but ſcenes of folly, depravity, and cunning. No wonder that the images connected with the city were diſaſtrous and gloomy; but my ſecond viſit produced ſomewhat different impreſſions.—Maravigli, Eſtwick, Medlicote, and you were

were beings who inſpired veneration and love. Your reſidence appeared to beautify and conſecrate this ſpot, and gave birth to an opinion that if cities are the choſen ſeats of miſery and vice, they are likewiſe the ſoil of all the laudable and ſtrenuous productions of mind.

My curioſity and thirſt of knowledge had likewiſe received a new direction. Books and inanimate nature were cold and lifeleſs inſtructors. Men, and the works of men, were the objects of rational ſtudy; and our own eyes only could communicate juſt conceptions of human performanees. The influence of manners, profeſſions, and ſocial inſtitutions could be thoroughly known only by direct inſpection.

Competence, fixed property, and a ſettled abode, rural occupations and conjugal pleaſures, were juſtly to be prized; but their value could be known, and their benefits fully enjoyed only by thoſe who have tried all ſcenes, who have mixed with all claſſes and ranks, who have partaken of all conditions,

conditions, and who have viſited different hemiſpheres, and climates, and nations.—The next five or eight years of my life ſhould be devoted to activity and change; it ſhould be a period of hardſhip, danger, and privation; it ſhould be my apprenticeſhip to fortitude and wiſdom, and be employed to fit me for the tranquil pleaſures and ſtedfaſt exertions of the remainder of my life.

In conſequence of theſe reflections, I determined to ſuppreſs that tenderneſs which the company of Miſs Hadwin produced, to remove any miſtakes into which ſhe had fallen, and to put it out of my power to claim from her more than the dues of friendſhip. All ambiguities in a caſe like this, and all delays were hurtful. She was not exempt from paſſion; but this paſſion I thought was young, and eaſily extinguiſhed.

In a ſhort time her health was reſtored, and her grief melted down into a tender melancholy. I choſe a ſuitable moment, when

not

not embarraſſed by the preſence of others, to reveal my thoughts. My diſcloſure was ingenuous and perfect. I laid before her the whole train of my thoughts, nearly in the order, though in different and more copious terms than thoſe in which I have juſt explained them to you. I concealed nothing. The impreſſion which her artleſs lovelineſs had made upon me at Malverton; my motives for eſtranging myſelf from her ſociety; the nature of my preſent feelings with regard to her, and my belief of the ſtate of her heart; the reaſonings into which I had entered; the advantages of wedlock, and its inconveniences; and, finally, the reſolution I had formed of ſeeking the city, and perhaps of croſſing the ocean, were minutely detailed.

She interrupted me not; but changing looks, bluſhes, flutterings, and ſighs ſhewed her to be deeply and variouſly affected by my diſcourſe. I pauſed for ſome obſervation or comment. She ſeemed conſcious of my expectation, but had no power to ſpeak.

Over-

Overpowered at length by her emotions, she burst into tears.

I was at a loss in what manner to construe these symptoms. I waited till her vehemence was somewhat subsided, and then said —"What think you of my schemes?—Your approbation is of some moment: do you approve of them, or not?"

This question excited some little resentment, and she answered—"You have left me nothing to say. Go, and be happy;—no matter what becomes of me! I hope I shall be able to take care of myself."

The tone in which this was said, had something in it of upbraiding.

"Your happiness," said I, "is too dear to me to leave it in danger. In this house you will not need my protection; but I shall never be so far from you, as to be disabled from hearing by letter how you fare, and of being active for your good. You have some money which you must husband well. Any rent from your farm cannot be soon expected; but what you have, if you

remain with Mr. Curling, will pay your board and all other expences for two years: but you must be a good economist. I shall expect," continued I, with a serious smile, "a punctual account of all your sayings and doings. I must know how every minute is employed, and every penny is expended; and if I find you erring, I must tell you so in good round terms."

These words did not dissipate the sullenness which her looks had betrayed. She still forbore to look at me, and said—"I do not know how I should tell you every thing. You care so little about me, that —I should only be troublesome. I am old enough to think and act for myself, and shall advise with nobody but myself."

"That is true," said I; "I shall rejoice to see you independent and free. Consult your own understanding, and act according to its dictates. Nothing more is wanting to make you useful and happy. Iam anxious to return to the city; but, if you will allow me, will go first to Malverton, see that

things

things are in due order, and that old Caleb is well. From thence, if you pleaſe, I will call at your uncle's, and tell him what has happened. He may otherwiſe entertain pretenſions, and form views, erroneous in themſelves, and injurious to you. He may think himſelf entitled to manage your eſtate. He may either ſuppoſe a will to have been made, or may actually have heard from your father, or from others, of that which you burned, and in which he was named executor. His boiſterous and ſordid temper may prompt him to ſeize your houſe and goods, unleſs ſeaſonably apprized of the truth; and, when he knows the truth, he may ſtart into rage, which I ſhall be more fitted to encounter than you. I am told that anger transforms him into a ferocious madman. Shall I call upon him?"

She ſhuddered at the picture which I had drawn of her uncle's character; but this emotion quickly gave place to ſelf-upbraiding, for the manner in which ſhe had repelled

my proffers of ſervice. She melted once more into tears, and exclaimed—

" I am not worthy of the pains you take for me. I am unfeeling and ungrateful. Why ſhould I think ill of you for deſpiſing me, when I deſpiſe myſelf?"

" You do yourſelf injuſtice, my friend. I think I ſee your moſt ſecret thoughts; and theſe, inſtead of exciting my anger or contempt, only awaken compaſſion and tenderneſs. You love; and muſt therefore conceive my conduct to be perverſe and cruel. I counted on your harbouring ſuch thoughts. Time only and reflection will enable you to ſee my motives in their true light. Hereafter you will recollect my words, and find them ſufficient to juſtify my conduct.—You will acknowledge the propriety of my engaging in the cares of the world, before I ſit down in retirement and eaſe."

" Ah, how much you miſtake me!—I admire and approve of your ſchemes. What angers and diſtreſſes me is, that you think me unworthy to partake of your cares and labours;

labours; that you regard my company as an obſtacle and encumbrance; that aſſiſtance and counſel muſt all proceed from you; and that no ſcene is fit for me, but what you regard as ſlothful and inglorious.

"Have I not the ſame claims to be wiſe, and active, and courageous as you?—If I am ignorant and weak, do I not owe it to the ſame cauſe that has made you ſo?—and will not the ſame means which promote your improvement, be likewiſe uſeful to me?—You deſire to obtain knowledge by travelling, and converſing with many perſons, and ſtudying many ſciences; but you deſire it for yourſelf alone. Me you think poor, weak, and contemptible, fit for nothing but to ſpin and churn. Provided I exiſt, am ſcreened from the weather, have enough to eat and drink, you are ſatisfied. As to ſtrengthening my mind, and enlarging my knowledge, theſe things are valuable to you; but on me they are thrown away. I deſerve not the gift."

This ſtrain, ſimple and juſt as it was, was wholly unexpected. I was ſurpriſed and diſconcerted. In my previous reaſonings, I had certainly conſidered her ſex as utterly unfitting her for thoſe ſcenes and purſuits to which I had deſtined myſelf. Not a doubt of the validity of my concluſion had inſinuated itſelf; but now my belief was ſhaken, though it was not ſubverted. I could not deny that human ignorance was curable by the ſame means in one ſex as in the other—that fortitude and ſkill were of no leſs value to one than to the other.

Doubtleſs my friend was rendered, by her age and inexperience, if not by her ſex, more helpleſs and dependant than I; but had I not been prone to overrate the difficulties which I ſhould encounter?—Had I not deemed unjuſtly of her conſtancy and force of mind?—Marriage would render her property joint, and would not compel me to take up my abode in the woods, to abide for ever in one ſpot, to ſhackle my curioſity, or limit my excurſions.

But

But marriage was a contract awful and irrevocable. Was this the woman with whom my reason enjoined me to blend my fate, without the power of diffolution?—Would not time unfold qualities in her which I did not at present suspect, and which would evince an incurable difference in our minds?—Would not time lead me to the feet of one, who more nearly approached that standard of ideal excellence, which poets and romancers had exhibited to my view?

These considerations were powerful and delicate. I knew not in what terms to state them to my companion, so as to preclude the imputation of arrogance or indecorum. It became me, however, to be explicit, and to excite her resentment rather than mislead her judgment. She collected my meaning from a few words; and, interrupting me, said—

"How very low is the poor Eliza in your opinion!—We are indeed both too young to be married. May I not see you, and

talk with you, without being your wife?—May I not ſhare your knowledge, relieve your cares, and enjoy your confidence, as a ſiſter might do?—May I not accompany you in your journies and ſtudies, as one friend accompanies another?—My property may be your's; you may employ it for your benefit and mine; not becauſe you are my huſband, but my friend. You are going to the city. Let me go along with you. Let me live where you live. The houſe that is large enough to hold you, will hold me. The fare that is good enough for you, will be luxury to me. Oh let it be ſo! will you?—You cannot think how ſtudious, how thoughtful, how inquiſitive I will be! How tenderly I will nurſe you when ſick! It is poſſible you may be ſick, you know; and no one in the world will be half ſo watchful and affectionate as I ſhall be.—Will you let me?"

In ſaying this, her earneſtneſs gave new pathos to her voice. Inſenſibly ſhe put her face

face close to mine, and, transported beyond the usual bounds of reserve by the charms of that picture which her fancy contemplated, she put her lips to my cheek, and repeated, in a melting accent—"Will you let me?"

You, my friends, who have not seen Eliza Hadwin, cannot conceive what effect this entreaty was adapted to produce in me. She has surely the sweetest voice, the most speaking features, and most delicate symmetry that ever woman possessed. Her guileless simplicity and tenderness made her more enchanting. To be the object of devotion to a heart so fervent and pure, was surely no common privilege. Thus did she tender me herself; and was not the gift to be received with eagerness and gratitude?

No. I was not so much a stranger to mankind as to acquiesce in this scheme. As my sister or my wife, the world would suffer us to reside under the same roof, to apply to common use the same property, and daily

to

to enjoy the company of each other: but ſhe was not my ſiſter, and marriage would be an act of the groſſeſt indiſcretion. I explained to her, in few words, the objections to which her project was liable.

"Well then," ſaid ſhe, "let me live in the next houſe—in the neighbourhood—or at leaſt in the ſame city!—Let me be where I may ſee you once a day, or once a week, or once a month!—Shut me not wholly from your ſociety, and the means of becoming, in time, leſs ignorant and fooliſh than I now am."

After a pauſe, I replied—"I love you too well not to comply with this requeſt. Perhaps the city will be as ſuitable a reſidence as any other for you, as it will, for ſome time, be moſt convenient to me. I ſhall be better able to watch over your welfare, and ſupply you with the means of improvement when you are within a ſmall diſtance. At preſent you muſt conſent to remain here, while I viſit your uncle, and afterwards go

to

to the city. I shall look out for you a suitable lodging, and inform you when it is found. If you then continue in the same mind, I will come; and, having gained the approbation of Mr. Curling, will conduct you to town."

Here ended our dialogue.

END OF VOL. II.

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